



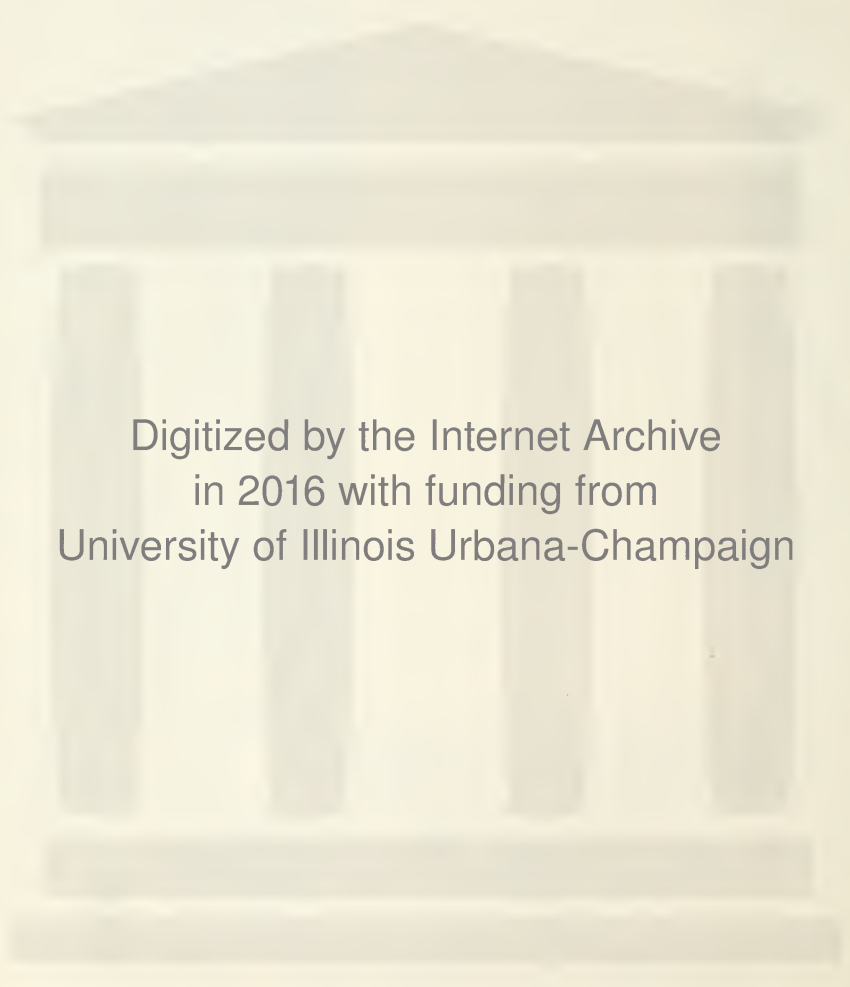
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FAIRY TALES.





LAIGHTON BROS.

THE DUMB MAIDEN SHEWN TO THE PEOPLE.



AIRY TALES



BY HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

ILLUSTRATED BY TWELVE LARGE DESIGNS IN COLOUR

AFTER ORIGINAL DRAWINGS BY

E. V. B.

NEWLY TRANSLATED BY H. L. D. WARD AND

AUGUSTA PLESNER.

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THE WILD SWANS.

THE UGLY DUCKLING.

THE FELLOW TRAVELLER.

THE LITTLE MERMAID.

THUMBKINETTA.

THE ANGEL.

THE GARDEN OF PARADISE.

THE SNOW QUEEN.



LONDON :

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, LOW, AND SEARLE,

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A STORY INSTEAD OF A PREFACE.

LUCK MAY LIE IN A STICK.



AM going to tell you a story about Luck. We all know Luck. Some see it the whole year round; others only for a certain season, or a single day: nay, some there are who only see it once in their life. But still we do see it, all of us.

Now, I need hardly tell you, for this everybody knows, that Our Lord sends the little child, and lays it in the mother's lap, wherever she may be; not only in the rich palace and the comfortable room, but also on the bare field, where the cold winds blow. But not every one knows, perhaps, and yet it is quite as certain, that Our Lord, as he brings the child, brings also a gift of Luck for it. This is not laid openly beside the child, however; but it is laid in some spot in the world, where one least thinks of finding it. And yet it is always found, and a happy thing that is for us! It may be stored up inside an apple; as it was, indeed, for a learned man, whose name was Newton. The apple fell down, and so his luck came to him. If you do not know the story, ask somebody who knows it to tell it you. I have another to tell just now, and that is a story of a pear.

There was once a poor man who was born in poverty, and who grew up in poverty, and in poverty he married. As to the rest, he was a turner by trade, and his special work was turning umbrella-sticks and umbrella-rings; but he could scarcely manage to live from hand to mouth.

"I shall never find any luck!" said he. Now, this is a true story of real life, and one could name the country and the place where the man lived. But that is of no consequence.

Some mountain-ash trees, with their clusters of sour red berries, made a fine show round his house and garden. In the middle of the garden there was a pear-tree also, but it never bore a single fruit; and yet the man's luck was laid in this pear-tree—laid in the invisible pears.

One night there was a terrible storm of wind. The newspapers told how the great stage-coach was whirled off the road, and swept along like a rag. No wonder, then, that a large branch was broken off the pear-tree.

The branch was laid in the workshop; and the man amused himself with turning first one and then another large pear, then a smaller one, and several pears at last that were very small indeed.

"The tree was bound to bear, some day!" said the man. And he gave his children the pears to play with.

One of life's necessities in a wet country is, no doubt, an umbrella. The whole house had but one for common use. If the wind was high, it often turned inside out, and more than once broke down altogether; but the man soon set it to rights again. It was provoking, though, how often the button, that kept it together when folded, would fly off; or the ring that was used to catch the button would snap asunder.

Both these accidents happened one day. The man searched the floor in vain for the button, but picked up one of the smallest of the wooden pears, that had been lost by the children in their play.

"The button is nowhere to be found," said the man; "but this little thing will do just as well." So he drilled a hole in it, and put a string through; and the little pear fitted well in the broken ring. It was indeed the best fastening the umbrella had ever had.

Next year, when the man sent his umbrella-sticks up to town, to the place he supplied with them, he sent also a couple of small wooden pears, each fitting into half a ring; and he begged they might be given a trial. It was soon found that the pear made a better fastening than any button; and large orders were received for umbrellas fastened with little pears.

Well, now there was work to be done! Pears by thousands! Wooden pears on all the umbrellas! The man had to set to work. He turned and turned. The whole pear tree was turned into little pears, the pears into pennies, and the pennies into pounds.

"In that pear tree my luck was laid!" said the man. He set up a large workshop, with workmen and apprentices. He was now always in good spirits; and, "Luck may lie in a stick!" he used to say.

And so say I, who am telling you this story.

There is an old saying, "Hold a white stick in your mouth, and you will be invisible." But then it must be the right stick, the one that our Lord has given us, as our gift of Luck. Such a stick was given to me; and by means of it I too can get gold, no less than the umbrella-man; and it is ringing gold, glittering gold, the finest of all,—that which rings from the children's lips, and glitters from the children's eyes; aye, and from those of father and mother too. They read my stories, and I stand among them in the room, but invisible, for I have the white stick in my mouth. And when I see they are happy at what I am telling them, then—aye, then—I say again, "Luck may lie in a stick!"

H. C. ANDERSEN.



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THE WILD SWANS.



AR away from here, in the lands that the swallows fly to when winter is coming, there lived a king who had eleven sons, and a daughter named Elisa. The eleven brothers went to school, like princes as they were, with stars on their breasts and sabres by their sides; they wrote on gold tablets with diamond pencils; and could say by heart, as well as read from the book: one had only to hear them to know they were princes. Their sister Elisa sat on a little footstool of plate glass, and had a picture-book that had cost half the kingdom.

Ah! those children had a pleasant time of it: but that was not to last for ever.

Their father, who was king of the whole country, married a wicked queen, who had no liking at all for the poor children; and this they felt on the very first day. There was feasting and merriment throughout the whole palace, and so the children played at "receiving company;" but, instead of their having as many cakes and roasted apples as could be got, she only gave them a teacup of sand, and said they must try and *make believe* with it.

The next week she sent little sister Elisa to some peasants in the country: and it was not long before she filled the king's head with so much stuff against the poor princes, that he ceased to care any more about them.

"Fly forth into the world, and look out for yourselves," said the wicked queen, "fly as great birds, without voices." But she could not make things quite as bad as she wished, and they became eleven beautiful wild swans. With a strange cry they flew out of the palace windows, away over the park and the forest.

It was still early in the morning when they passed by the place where Elisa lay sleeping in the peasant's cottage. Here they hovered over the roof, turned their long necks, and flapped their wings; but no one either heard or saw them: they must needs fly further on, high up towards the clouds, and far out into the wide

world. So on they went to the great dark forest that stretched right down to the sea shore.

Poor little Elisa used to stand in the peasant's parlour, and play with a green leaf. She had no other toys. And she pricked holes in it, and peeped through them at the sun; and she could fancy she saw her Brothers' bright eyes: and whenever the warm sunbeams shone on her cheek, she thought of all their kisses.

One day passed like another. If the wind blew through the sweetbriar hedges round the house, it would whisper to the roses, "Is there anyone prettier than you?" But the roses shook their heads and said, "Who, but Elisa?" And when the goodwife sat on a Sunday in the cottage door reading her psalm-book, the wind would turn the leaves over, and say to the book, "Is there anyone better than you?" And "Who but Elisa?" said the psalm-book. And it was nothing but the simple truth that was spoken by the roses and by the psalm-book.

When she was fifteen years old, she was sent for home. And when the Queen saw her pretty face, she felt angry and spiteful; and she would gladly have turned her into another wild swan, but she dared not do it at once, for the King wanted to see his daughter.

Next morning the Queen went early into her bath-room. It was built of marble, and fitted up with soft cushions and rich carpets. And she took three toads, pressed a kiss upon each, and said to one, "Settle thou on Elisa's head, when she comes in, that she may grow dull like thee:" and to another, "Settle on her brow, that she may be hideous like thee, and her father may not know her:" "Nestle on her heart," she whispered to the third, "give her wicked thoughts, that will end in pain and sorrow." Then she put the toads into the clean water, and it straightway took a greenish hue; and she called Elisa, and undressed her, and bade her dip under the water; and while she was dipping, down squatted one toad on her hair, another on her brow, and the third clung to her bosom. But Elisa seemed not to mark them; and when she got out of the bath, there were three red poppies floating in the water. If the creatures had not been poisonous by nature and kissed by the witch, they would have been changed into red roses. But still, flowers they did become by resting on her head and near her heart: she was too innocent and good for witchcraft to prevail against her.

When the wicked Queen saw this, she rubbed her skin with walnut-juice till she was quite swarthy; smeared her pretty face with a stinking ointment; and matted her silky locks together: one would never have thought it was the pretty Elisa.

So when her father saw her, he was quite dismayed, and said that she could not be his daughter. There was no one who knew her again, except the watch-dog and the swallows: but they were poor animals, and had nothing to say in the matter.

Then poor Elisa wept, and thought of her eleven Brothers, who had all disappeared. With a sad heart she stole out of the palace, and wandered all day over moss and moor

till she reached the forest. She knew not where she wished to go : she only felt a deep sorrow, and a longing for her brothers : they, like her, had been driven out into the world, and now she would seek them and find them.

Before she had been long in the forest, the night fell : she had gone clean astray from road and footpath : then she lay down in the soft moss, said her evening prayer, and propped her head against the stump of a tree. There was a perfect stillness and softness in the air : and all around, upon grass and heather, gleamed the green lights of hundreds of glow-worms ; if her head did but lightly touch a branch, the bright insects dropped like falling stars at her feet.

All night long she dreamed of her Brothers. They were playing again as children, writing with diamond pencils upon gold tablets, and looking at the pictures in the beautiful book that had cost half the kingdom. But they did not, as of old, write only lines and figures on the tablets ; not at all ! but the deeds they had dared, and all they had suffered, all they had seen. And in the picture-book all this was alive. The birds were singing, and the people were coming out of the books, and talking to Elisa and her brothers : only, whenever she turned the leaf, they jumped back into their places, that there might be no confusion among the pictures.

When she awoke, the sun stood high in the heavens already. Not that she could see the sun itself ; the tall trees spread their boughs too close together ; but the treetops caught the beams, and looked like a waving golden veil. She smelt the fragrance of the greenwood : and the birds thronged around, merrily singing on her shoulders. She heard the splash of water : it came from many bubbling springs, that all fell into a pool, with a most beautiful floor of sand. It was thickly fenced with bushes all round ; only in one place the deer had trodden a great gap, and through this Elisa went down to the water. It was so clear that, if the wind had not stirred the branches and bushes to and fro, she might have fancied they were painted on the bottom ; so distinctly was every leaf reflected, both that which the sun shone through, and that which was deep in shadow.

When she first saw her face in the water, she was frightened, it looked so brown and hideous ; but when she dipped her hand, and rubbed her eyes and forehead, the white skin soon gleamed forth again. Then she took off all her clothes, and stepped out into the fresh water ; and a more beautiful king's child than she was could nowhere be found in all the world.

When she had dressed herself again, and braided her long hair, she went to the bubbling spring, drank from the hollow of her hand, and again wandered further in the forest, she knew not whither. She thought of her Brothers : she thought of the good God ; surely he would not forsake her ; he made the wild apple-tree grow in the forest to feed the hungry ; and lo ! even such a tree did he show her now : and the branches bent under the fruit. Here she made her dinner, set props under the boughs, and walked on into the depths of the forest. There was such a dead stillness, she could hear her

own footsteps, and every little sere leaf that was crushed under her foot. Not a bird was to be seen: not a sunbeam could pierce the roof of boughs and foliage: the tall stems stood so near each other, that it seemed, when she looked straight before her, as if palisade after palisade enclosed her. Oh, this was a solitude such as she had never known before.

The night grew pitch dark. Not a single glow-worm shone from the moss. She laid her sadly down to sleep. Then it seemed as if the roof of branches parted asunder and Our Lord looked down with mild eyes upon her, and little angels peeped forth above his head, and under his arms.

When she awoke in the morning, she knew not whether it had been a dream or a reality.

She went a few steps onwards; then she met an old woman with a basket of berries, who gave her some to eat. And Elisa asked her whether she had seen eleven princes riding through the forest.

"No," said the old woman, "but yesterday I saw eleven swans with gold crowns on their heads, swimming on the brook down yonder."

And she led Elisa a little further on to a slope, at the foot of which wound a rivulet. The trees on its banks stretched their long leafy boughs towards each other; and where they could not meet by natural growth, they had torn their roots loose from the ground, and now they leaned forward across the water, and mingled their boughs together.

Elisa bade the old woman farewell, and walked down the brook to where it opened out upon the great sea-shore.

The beautiful wide ocean lay before the young girl; but not a sail shone upon it, not a boat was to be seen. Would she ever be able to get further? She looked at the numberless pebbles on the beach; the water had rounded and smoothed them all—glass, iron, stone, all that had been washed up, had been moulded by the water, and yet it was softer than her own soft hand. "It is never weary of rolling, and thus hard things and rough things are worn smooth. I will be as unwearied. Thanks for your lesson, ye clear rolling waves; some day, my heart tells me, ye will bear me to my brothers."

On the stranded sea-weed there lay eleven white swan-feathers. She gathered them into a bunch: water-drops hung about them, whether dew or tears, one could not tell. It was lonely on the shore; but she felt it not, the sea offered such a constant change,—more of it, indeed, in a few hours, than inland waters can display in a whole year. Whenever there passed a large black cloud the sea seemed to say, "I can look murky too;" and the wind blew, and the waves showed their white heads. But when the clouds had a ruddy glow, and the wind slept, then the sea lay looking like a rose-leaf. One moment again it was green, and another white. Yet it never lay so calm but what there was always a gentle stir upon the beach; the water just heaved, like the bosom of a sleeping child.

When the sun was near setting, Elisa saw eleven wild swans, with golden crowns upon their heads, flying towards the shore. They stretched one behind another, like a long white ribbon. Then Elisa climbed the beach, and hid behind a bush. The swans alighted close to where she stood, and flapped their great white wings.

The sun sank below the water, and suddenly the swan-skins fell off, and there stood eleven beautiful princes! Elisa gave a loud cry; for, much as they were altered, she knew who they were. She felt they must be her Brothers, and she sprang into their arms. And they were as happy too, when they saw and knew their little Sister, who was grown so tall and beautiful. They laughed and wept; and soon they knew each other's stories, and how wicked their stepmother had been to them all.

"We brothers," said the eldest, "fly like wild swans as long as the sun is in the sky; when it is down, we take the shape of man again. So we must always take care to find rest for our feet before sunset; for if we were flying then among the clouds, we should fall plump into the deep, as men. We do not dwell here. A land as fair as this lies beyond the sea, but the way to it is long; we have to cross the ocean: and there is no island to pass the night upon, save a solitary rock that rises midway, just large enough for us all, when standing side by side. When there is a heavy sea, the foam dashes high above us: still we thank God for the resting-place. There we pass the night in our human shapes. Were it not for that, we could never come and visit our dear native land; for two of the longest days in the year are wanted for our flight. Only once a year it is granted us to come to our forefathers' home. Eleven days we may remain; fly over the great forest; and look down upon the palace where we were born, and where our father lives, and upon the tower of the church where our mother lies buried. Here the trees and bushes seem to be our kith and kin; here the wild horses scour the plains, just as they did in our childhood; here the charcoal burner sings the old songs that we danced to when we were children; here is our native land: hither we are drawn, and here we have found thee, thou dear little Sister. Two days more we are allowed to tarry here; then we must fly away to a glorious land—but not our native land. How shall we take thee with us? We have neither ship nor boat!"

"How shall I be able to release you?" said the Sister. And thus they talked together all the night. Only a few hours were spent in slumber.

Elisa was awake by the rushing sound of wings above her. The brothers were again transformed; and they flew round in large circles, and at length clean away. But one of them, the youngest, stayed behind; and the Swan laid his head in her lap, and she stroked his white wings. The whole day they were together. Towards evening the others returned; and when the sun was down they stood in their natural shapes.

"To-morrow we must fly quite away!" said one of them, "and we dare not return within a year. But we cannot leave thee here alone. Hast thou courage to go with

us! My arm is strong enough to carry thee through the forest. Must not all our wings together be strong enough to carry thee over the sea?"

"Yes, pray take me too!" said Elisa.

They spent the whole night weaving a net of tough rushes and pliant willow-bark. They made it large and strong, and Elisa laid down on it; and at sunrise, when the brothers became wild Swans, they seized it with their beaks, and flew up high towards the clouds, bearing their Sister, who was still asleep. The sunbeams shone full upon her face; so one of the Swans flew above her head, that his broad wings might give her shade. They were far from land when Elisa awoke, she thought she was still dreaming, so strange it seemed to be borne over the water high up through the air. By her side lay a cluster of beautiful ripe berries, and a handful of savoury roots. These her youngest brother had gathered and laid beside her; and she smiled him her thanks, for she knew it was he who flew above her head, and shaded her with his wings.

They were so high aloft, that the first ship they saw seemed like a white sea-gull skimming the water. A large cloud rose behind her, piled up like a mountain: and on this Elisa saw the flying shadows of herself and the eleven Swans, gigantic in size. It was the grandest picture she had ever seen: but as the sun rose higher, and the cloud was left further behind, the shadow-picture vanished.

All day they flew along, swift as an arrow whizzing through the air: and yet they flew slower than usual, for now they had their Sister to carry. There was bad weather brewing: evening drew near: anxiously did Elisa mark the sinking sun: and still there was not a glimpse of the lonely rock among the waves. It seemed to her as if the Swans made harder efforts with their wings. Alas, it was her fault if they did not speed fast enough; if they turned into men and fell headlong, at sunset, and were drowned in the ocean! she prayed to God in her inmost heart: still there was no rock to be seen. The black shades gathered closer: the gusts of wind foretold a tempest: the clouds towered into one vast billow, that, solid as lead, swept onwards, with flashes flickering around it.

Now the sun was on the rim of the sea. Elisa's heart quaked. Then the Swans shot down so swiftly, that she thought she must fall: but forward they flew again. The sun was half in the water: but now she really spied the little rock; it looked no bigger than a seal, thrusting his head above water. The sun was fast disappearing: it was only like a star: now her foot touched the hard ground, and out went the sun like the last spark in a burning paper. The Brothers stood arm-in-arm around her; but there was not an inch of ground to spare. The waves dashed against the rock, flinging over them showers of foam. The sky was all a-blaze with lightning, and the thunder never ceased rolling. But the Brothers and the Sister joined hands and sang a psalm together; and this gave them comfort and courage.

At daybreak the air was pure and calm: and as soon as the sun rose, the Swans flew away with Elisa from the rock. The sea still ran high, and looking from their

lofty flight, they saw the white crests of the dark green waves, like millions of swans riding on the water.

As the sun rose higher, Elisa saw a mountain land before her, half swimming in the sky, with shining peaks and glaciers. Midway up there stood a palace, that seemed to stretch for miles, with one colonnade soaring high above another, and forests of waving palm-trees below them, and gorgeous flowers as large as mill-wheels. She asked if this were the land she was bound for, but the Swans shook their heads; for what she saw was the wonderful ever-changing castle of Fata Morgana; and no human being dared they take within it. Elisa gazed at it. Mountains, forest, and palace fell to pieces; and twenty grand churches stood there, all alike, with lofty towers and pointed windows. She fancied she could hear the organs peal; but it was only the sea she heard; now she was close up to the churches, and behold they changed into a large fleet, that came sailing under her; she looked closer, they were sea-mists, chasing over the waves. There was no end to the changes; till at last she saw the real land, whither she was bound. A land of beautiful blue mountains, with cedar-groves, and castles, and towns. Long ere the sun went down, she rested on a mountain, at the mouth of a large cave that was hung with green luxuriant creepers; it looked as if they were embroidered tapestries.

"Now we shall see what thou dreamest here to-night!" said the youngest Brother, and showed her her sleeping-place.

"Would that I could dream," she said, "how to release you all." But this thought set her mind at work so busily, and she prayed to God for help so earnestly, that even in her dreams she went on praying. Then it appeared to her that she flew high up to the cloud-castle of Fata Morgana. And the Fairy came forward to meet her, brilliant and beautiful; and yet strangely like the old woman in the forest, who had given her berries and had told her of the Swans with the golden crowns.

"Thy Brothers can be released," she said. "Hast thou courage and endurance? True, the sea is softer than thy soft hands, and yet transforms the hard stones: but then it does not feel the pain thy fingers will feel—it has no heart—it is dead to the terrors and torments which thou must endure. Seest thou this stinging nettle in my hand? many of the same kind grow around the cave where thou sleepest. Only those, or such as spring up from churchyard graves are of any use; mark that! Thou must pluck them, though they will brand thy skin with blisters; thou must break the nettles with thy feet, and they will yield thee flax: then thou shalt spin and knit thereof eleven tunics with long sleeves; throw them over the eleven wild Swans, and the spell is broken. But mind this! From the moment thou beginnest thy work, until it is completed—even if it lasts for years—thou must not speak! The first word thou utterest will be a killing dagger in thy Brothers' hearts! upon thy tongue hangs their life, mark that well!"

The Fairy ceased, and touched Elisa's hand with the nettle; it burned like fire, and Elisa woke. It was broad daylight, and close to her couch there lay a nettle,

like that which she had seen in her dream. Then she fell upon her knees and thanked God, and went out of the cave to begin her work.

Her tender hands she plunged into the horrid nettles, and plucked them. They burned great blisters on her hands and arms; but she was glad to suffer this, if she could hope to release her dear brothers. She broke each nettle with her naked feet, and twisted the green fibres into yarn.

When the sun had sunk the Brothers returned, and were much alarmed at her remaining speechless. This was a new spell of the wicked Stepmother's, they thought; but when they saw her hands, they knew what she was doing for their sake. And the youngest Brother wept, and wherever his tears fell she felt no more pain, and the burning blisters disappeared.

The whole night she spent in her work, for she could take no rest till she had released her Brothers. And all the following day, while the Swans were absent, she sat in solitude, and yet time had never flown so rapidly. One tunic was ready, she now began the second.

But hark! a bugle-horn rang among the mountains. She was startled by the sound. It came nearer. She heard the baying of hounds, and, frightened, she fled deep into the cave, and tied the nettles she had gathered and hackled into a bunch, and sat down upon it.

The next moment a large hound sprung out from the thicket, and another close after him, and then another: they bayed loudly, and ran to and fro. A few minutes more, and all the hunters stood before the cave, and the handsomest among them was the King of the land. He stepped up to Elisa: never had he seen a lovelier maiden.

"How camest thou here, thou beautiful child?" said he. Elisa shook her head, she dared not speak; her Brothers' lives and deliverance were at stake. And she hid her hands under her apron, that the King might not see what she had to suffer.

"Come with me!" said he. "Here thou must not stay! if thou art good as thou art beautiful, I will clothe thee in silks and satins, and set the gold crown on thy head; and thou shalt dwell in my richest palace." And, so saying, he lifted her upon his horse. She wept and wrung her hands; but the king said: "I only wish thy happiness! some day thou wilt thank me for this!" And he sped away between the mountains, holding her on his horse in front, while the other hunters followed rapidly.

When the sun was setting, the splendid royal city with its towers and domes lay before them. And the King led her into the palace, where goodly fountains plashed in the high marble halls, and where walls and ceilings glowed with paintings. But Elisa had no eyes for it all. She wept and wailed, and she scarcely knew that the women were decking her in royal array, braiding her hair with pearls, and drawing soft gloves upon her blistered fingers.

And as she stood there in all her splendour, her beauty was so dazzling that the

THE KING RIDING OFF WITH THE
DUMB MAIDEN.

court bowed low before her, and the King proclaimed her his bride; though the Archbishop shook his head, and whispered that the fair girl of the forest was no doubt a witch, who blinded their eyes, and beguiled the heart of the King.

The King heard, but heeded not. He bade the music sound, the costliest meats be served, the prettiest girls come and dance before her; and she was led through fragrant gardens into stately halls. But not a smile passed over her lips or eyes: sorrow claimed them, to have and to hold for ever. The King opened a door close to her sleeping chamber, and a little room was there that was decked with costly green hangings, and looked just like the cave in which he had found her. On the floor lay the bundle of yarn that she had spun out of the nettles; and on the wall hung the tunic she had already knitted. One of the hunters had brought these home with him as curiosities.

"Here thou canst dream thyself back into thy former home," said the King. "Here is the work which busied thee there; now it may amuse thee, in the midst of thy new splendour, to look back upon that time."

When Elisa saw the very things that lay nearest her heart, a smile played about her lips, and the blood ran back into her cheeks; she thought of the deliverance of her Brothers, and she kissed the King's hand. He pressed her to his heart, and set all the church-bells ringing for their bridal; and the fair maid of the forest was Queen of the land.

Then the Archbishop whispered evil words in the King's ear, but they did not reach his heart. No, the marriage must hold good, and the Archbishop himself must crown her, and in bitter mood he did so: he pressed the narrow golden band so hard upon her brow, that it bruised her; but a tighter band lay round her heart; and, yearning for her Brothers, she did not feel the pain. Her mouth was dumb: a word might rob her Brothers of their life; but her eyes spoke her tenderness for the kind, the handsome King, who would do anything to give her joy. Every day her heart turned more towards him. Oh! if she might only unbosom her griefs, and tell him all! But no, dumb she must remain, dumb she must fulfil her task. Therefore in the night she stole from his side, she stole into the room that was dressed up like the cave, and she knitted one tunic after another; but just as she began the seventh, she found she had no yarn left.

In the churchyard, she knew, grew the nettles she had to use; but she must gather them herself; how was she to get there!

"What is the pain in my fingers to the care in my heart?" she thought. "I must venture it, our Lord will not forsake me!" With dread, as if she had some evil deed in hand, she crept into the garden on a moonlight night, passed through the long alleys, and out into the deserted streets, and reached the churchyard. There, on one of the broadest gravestones, she saw a pack of witches cowering,—ghouls they were;—they threw off their rags, as if for bathing, and dug the fresh graves with their long, lean

fingers, and fed upon the corpses. Elisa had to pass them close by, and they fixed their wicked eyes upon her. But she thought her prayer, and gathered the burning nettles, and brought them home to the palace.

Only one human being had seen her—the Archbishop, who was awake while others slept. Now his forebodings were fully borne out; there was indeed something wrong about the Queen! She was a witch, and thus had she beguiled the King and the whole people.

In the confessional he told the King what he had feared and all he had seen. And when the hard words left his tongue, the carven images of the saints shook their heads, as if they would say, “It is not so! Elisa is innocent!” But the Archbishop read the sign otherwise, and maintained that they bore witness against her, and shook their heads at her wickedness.

Then two heavy tears rolled down the cheeks of the King, and he went home with doubt in his heart. All night he pretended to sleep, but no sleep came to his eyes. He marked how Elisa rose, and this was repeated every night. And every night he stole after her silently, and saw her disappear in her own little room.

Day after day his countenance grew darker. Elisa saw this, and knew not the cause, but it troubled her, and she was very sick at heart because of her Brothers. Her salt tears fell on the purple velvets of royalty, where they lay like glittering diamonds; and every woman who saw the splendour wished she herself was Queen. But now her work drew near its close; only one tunic was still to be done. But she had no yarn left, and not a nettle either. Once more—only once—she must go to the graveyard and gather a few handfuls. She shuddered to think of the lonely road and of the hideous ghouls; but her will was strong, and so was her trust in God.

She went, and the King and the Archbishop followed. They watched her disappear through the grated churchyard gate, and when they drew near it, they saw the ghouls upon the gravestone. And the King turned away; for one of them, he thought, was she, whose head this very night had rested on his bosom.

“The people must judge her,” said he; and the people judged, saying, “Let the red flames burn her!”

She was led away from the rich, royal halls into a dank, murky dungeon, where the wind whistled through the grated window. Instead of silks and velvets, they gave her the bundle of nettles she had gathered: this she might rest her head upon. The coarse, stinging tunics she had knitted might serve her for counterpane and mattress. But there was nothing they could have given her that she held so dear. She set to work afresh, and prayed to God; while the street boys outside the prison sang ribald songs about her, and no one offered her a word of comfort.

Close to the grated window, as evening fell, there came the rushing of a swan's wing. It was the youngest of the Brothers; he had found their Sister. And she sobbed aloud for joy, though she knew that the very next night was perchance the last she

THE QUEEN DISENCHANTS THE WILD
SWANS AND FAINTS UPON THE FUNERAL
PYRE.



would have to live. But now her work, at least, was well nigh done, and her Brothers were near at hand.

The Archbishop came to spend her last hours with her, this he had promised the King. But she shook her head, and begged him with looks and gestures to be gone. This night she must complete her work, or all would be in vain! all, her sufferings, her tears, and her sleepless nights. The Archbishop departed, with many an evil word against her. But poor Elisa knew she was innocent, and she went on with her work.

The small mice, that ran on the floor, dragged the nettles to her feet to try and help her a little; and a thrush perched on the sill of the grated window, and sang all night as cheerily as it could, that Elisa might not lose courage.

It was still the early dawn,—it wanted an hour to sunrise,—when the eleven Brothers stood at the palace gate, and demanded to be led before the King. But it could not be done, they were told; why, it was still night; the King slept, and must not be woke up. They begged, they threatened; the watch came up; ay, the King himself stepped out, and asked what all this meant? At that very moment the sun rose, and the Brothers were nowhere to be seen, but high above the palace flew eleven wild Swans!

From the gates of the city streamed the whole people; they wished to see the burning of the witch. A wretched horse drew the cart; and there she sat, clothed in a coarse frock of sackcloth; her beautiful long tresses hung loose around her shapely head; her cheeks were deadly pale; her lips moved silently while her fingers knitted the green yarn. Even on her way to death she would not let go her work; the ten tunics lay by her feet, she was knitting now at the eleventh. The crowd laughed her to scorn, "Look at the witch, see how she mutters! 'Tis not a prayer-book she has got in hand. No, she is still at her filthy witch-work! Tear it from her! Tear it in a thousand pieces!"

And they thronged in upon her, and would have torn the work away. Then there came eleven white Swans flying; they alighted round about her on the cart, and flapped with their great wings, and the crowd drew back in fear.

"It is a sign from heaven! She is clearly innocent!" many whispered, but they dared not say it aloud.

Now the headsman seized her by the hand. Then in haste she threw the eleven tunics over the Swans, and there stood eleven handsome Princes! but the youngest had a swan's wing instead of a second arm, for a sleeve in his tunic was wanting, she had not had time to finish it.

"Now I dare speak!" she cried; "I am innocent!"

And the people who saw what had taken place, bowed before her as before a saint. But she sank lifeless in her Brothers' arms,—so much had cares and sufferings worked upon her.

"Yes! she is innocent!" said the eldest Brother; and he now told all that had


happened. And while he spoke, an odour spread abroad, as of millions of roses, for every stake in the pile had struck root, and put forth branches; it stood there, a whole thicket of sweetness, teeming with red roses! But, high above all, there grew a blossom, dazzling white, shining like a star. And the King plucked it, and laid it on Elisa's breast; then she awoke, with peace and gladness in her heart.

And all the church bells rang of themselves, and the birds came flying in great flocks; and a wedding procession went back to the palace, such as no king had ever seen before.





THE UGLY DUCKLING.

T was beautiful out in the country. It was summer-time. The rye stood yellow, the oats were green ; the hay was stacked in the green meadow, and there the stork walked on his long red legs, and chattered Egyptian, for he had learned that language from his mother. Round about the fields and meadows were great woods, and in the middle of the woods were deep lakes. Ay, it was beautiful indeed in the country. Basking in full sunshine stood an old manor house, with deep moats surrounding it ; and from the walls and down to the water's edge were great green dock-leaves, growing tall enough for small children to stand upright under the largest ones : it was as bewildering there as in the thickest wood. Under these dock-leaves a Duck was sitting on her nest : she was busy hatching her little ducklings, but now she was well-nigh tired of sitting, it had lasted so long, and she so seldom got a visitor ; for the other ducks were fonder of swimming about in the moats, than of running up and sitting under a dock-leaf to have a quack with her.

At last one egg cracked, and then another,—“Peep, peep!” they said—the yolks of egg had come to life, and poked out their heads.

“Quick ! quick !” said the Duck ; and quick they were to look about them, inspecting the green leaves on every side ; and the mother let them look as much as they pleased, for green is good for the eyes.

“How wide the world is !” said all the youngsters. And now indeed they had a very different amount of room from what they had been used to in the egg.

“Do you think this is the whole world ?” said the mother ; “no, no ; *that* stretches far beyond the garden, right into the parson's field ; but there I have never been. You are all here, I suppose ?” and so saying, she got up. “No ; not all yet ! the biggest egg is still lying there. How long is this to last ? I am really getting quite sick of it !” and she crouched down once more.

"Well, how are you getting on?" said an old dame Duck who came up to pay a visit.

"There is one egg that takes such a time," said the sitting Duck; it won't get a hole chipped in it; but now you must see the others: they are the sweetest ducklings I ever saw. They are all like their father—the wretch! he never comes to visit me."

"Let me see the egg that won't break," said the old dame Duck; "you may be sure it's a turkey's egg. I have once been cheated in that way myself, and I had plenty of cares and troubles about the youngsters, for they are afraid of the water, I can tell you; I could never get them on to it. I quacked and snapped, but it was all no use. Let me look at it—ay, that is a turkey's egg! leave that alone, I say, and teach the other children to swim."

"I will sit a little bit longer," said the sitting Duck, "now that I have gone so far, I may as well go on to the end."

"Please yourself," said the old dame Duck, and off she went.

At length the big egg broke. "Peep, peep!" said the young one, and rolled out, so big and so ugly! The Duck looked at him. "What a frightfully big duckling he is!" she said, "none of the others looks at all like this. Now is it a turkey chick, or is it not? Well, we shall soon find out! Into the water shall he go, even if I have to kick him into it!"

Next day it was lovely weather, the sun shone down among all the green docks; and mother Duck with her whole family came out along the moat, and splash she went into the water. "Quick, quick!" she cried; and one duckling after another popped in; the water closed over their heads, but they all came straight up again, and floated famously, their legs moved of themselves, and they all pushed out, even the grey ugly one swimming among them.

"No, this is not a turkey," she said; "see how cleverly he uses his legs, how upright he holds himself! he is my own duckling! And, after all, he is rather good-looking, when one sees him better. Quick, quick! come along now, and I will take you into the world, and present you in the duck-yard; but keep close to me, that you mayn't get trodden on, and mind the cats!"

And so they came into the duck-yard. There was a tremendous uproar going on there, for there were two families fighting about an eel's head—and after all, the cat got it.

"See! that is the way of the world!" said mother Duck; and she licked her beak, for she too was longing to have the eel's head. "Now use your legs," she said, "and be quick, and make your best bow to the old duck yonder, she is the grandest of all the company; she is of Spanish blood, that is why she is so big; and you see she has a red rag round her leg, that is something wonderfully fine, and the highest honour which any duck can receive, and it means that the place cannot do without her, and that due regard

must be paid her by animals and men. Quick now ; don't turn in your feet, a well-behaved duckling sets its legs wide apart like father and mother. That's right.—Now bow your head, and say quack !”

They did as they were told, but the other ducks in the yard looked at them, and said out loud, “ What, are we going to let all the riff-raff in here, as if we were not enough already ? only see that duckling there, all by himself, *him* we really can't stand.” And a duck flew at him at once, and bit him in the nape of the neck.

“ Leave him alone,” said the mother, “ he does nobody any harm.”

“ But he is so big, and such an oddity !” rejoined the duck who had bitten him, “ he wants a good shaking.”

“ A nice set of children you have got there, mother,” remarked the old Duck with the rag round her leg ; “ all very handsome, except that one, he has not been a success, I could wish he might be hatched over again.”

“ That can hardly be done, your ladyship,” said the Duck-mother, “ certainly, he is not handsome, but he is thoroughly good-natured, and he swims as well as any of the lot, indeed, I might almost say, a little better. I fancy he will grow handsomer, and he may even in time, perhaps, grow smaller. He has been lying too long in the shell, and that's why he has got out of the right shape.” And, so saying, she pecked him on the back of his head, and smoothed him down all over. “ Besides,” she added, “ he is a drake, and so it does not matter so much. I believe he will get plenty of strength, and make his own way in the world.”

“ The other ducklings are little dears,” said the old lady. “ Pray make yourselves at home ; and if any of you find an eel's head, he may bring it to me.” And so they made themselves at home.

But as for the poor Duckling that was the last out of the shell, and looked such a scarecrow, he was mocked and bitten and buffeted, both by ducks and fowls. “ He is too big,” they all agreed ; and the turkey-cock, who was born with spurs, and therefore thought he was an emperor, puffed himself up like a ship in full sail, marched right up to him, and gobbled till he was purple in the head. The poor Duckling knew not where to go or stand ; he was so sorry that he was so ugly, and the laughing-stock of the whole duck-yard.

So things went the first day, and each day they got worse. The poor Duckling was hunted by every one ; and even his brothers and sisters were wicked enough to say to him : “ Oh, if the cat would only take thee, thou wretched scarecrow !” and the mother said : “ I do wish you were ever so far away !” and the ducks bit him, the hens pecked him, and the maid who was to feed the poultry kicked him off with her foot.

Then he ran away. He went running and flying over the hedge. The little birds flew out in a fright ; “ that is because I look so hideous,” thought the Duckling ; and he closed his eyes, but still ran on. And so he came out upon a large moor, where the wild ducks lived. Here he lay the whole night. He was so tired and so sorrowful.

In the morning the wild ducks flew up, and looked at their new companion. "Pray, who are you?" they asked; and the Duckling turned round on all sides, and bowed as nicely as he could.

"You are intensely ugly," said the wild ducks, "but that is no matter of ours, provided you don't marry into our family." Poor fellow, he certainly had no thoughts of marrying, but only of lying down in the rushes, and drinking a little moor water.

He lay there two whole days; then there came two wild geese, or rather wild ganders, for they were males. They were not very long out of the shell, and that was why they were such fast fellows.

"Hark ye," said they, "you are so ugly that we have taken a fancy to you. Will you go out with us on the loose, and be a bird of passage? In another moor close by there are some sweet blessed little wild geese—all of them young ladies who can say 'cackle!' Who knows but you may make your fortune there, with all your ugliness?"

"Bang! bang!" sounded that very instant: and both the wild geese fell down into the rushes, and reddened the water with their blood. "Bang! bang!" resounded once more: and whole flocks of geese flew up out of the rushes, and again the echoes rang.

There was a great shooting party; the fowlers lay in ambush on the moors, and some of them were perched on the boughs of trees overhanging the reeds. The blue smoke gathered in clouds between the dark trees, and stretched far away over the water. The dogs plunged down into the mud—splash! splash! Reeds and rushes sway to and fro. What a terror to the poor Duckling! he turned round his head to hide it under his wing, and, lo! close to him stood an awfully big dog, with his tongue hanging far out of his jaws, and a sinister glare in his eyes. He grinned in the very face of the Duckling, showed his sharp teeth, and—splash!—turned away without touching him.

"Thank heaven;" sighed the Duckling, "I am so ugly that even the dog wont bite me."

And so he lay perfectly still, whilst the duck-shot pattered in the rushes, and gun after gun kept ringing.

Late in the afternoon it grew quiet; but still the poor youngster waited some hours, not daring to lift his head. At last he looked around him, and then scudded away from the moor at full speed; though there was such a blast blowing over field and meadow, that it was hard work to get along.

Towards nightfall he reached a little hut; it was so rickety that it did not know which side to fall upon, and so it remained standing. The wind whistled round the Duckling, till he had to sit on his tail to hold up against it. Still it grew worse and worse. But now he noticed that the door had come off one of its hinges, and hung so much askew, that he could squeeze through the chink into the room; and this he did.

THE OLD WOMAN, WITH CUCKOO
SHORTLEGS AND THE CAT, WHO WOULDN'T
ASSOCIATE WITH THE UGLY DUCKLING.







An old woman lived here, with her cat and her hen. The Cat, whom she called her *laddie*, could set up his back and spin;¹ now and then, too, he sparkled, but that was only when he was stroked the wrong way; as for the hen, her legs were very short, so she was called *Cluckety Short-legs*, she was good at laying eggs, and the old woman loved her as her own child.

Next morning they soon spied the strange Duckling; and the Cat began spinning and the Hen clucking.

"What is the matter?" said the old Woman, looking about; but she was dull of sight, and fancied that the Duckling was a fat duck that had gone astray. "A rare find!" she said; "now I can get duck's eggs,—at least, if it is not a drake; well, that we must try."

And so the Duckling was taken in upon trial; but three weeks went by, and no eggs came. Now the Cat and the Hen were master and mistress of the house, and they used always to say, "we and the world," for they fancied they were half the world, and *that* the better half. The Duckling thought others might have a different opinion, but *this* the Hen would never allow.

"Can you lay eggs?" she asked.

"No."

"Well then, hold your tongue!"

And the Cat said, "Can you set up your back, and spin, and sparkle?"

"No."

"Well then, don't have any opinion of your own when people of sense are speaking."

And the Duckling sat in the corner, and was all in the dumps. He began thinking of fresh air and sunshine, till he felt a strange desire to float on the water, and at last—he could not help it—he must needs tell it to the Hen.

"What ever has come over you?" she asked; "you have nothing to do, and that's why such whims come into your head; lay eggs, or spin, and then they will pass away."

"But it is so beautiful to float on the water!" said the Duckling: "so beautiful to duck in head foremost, and dive down to the bottom!"

"A mighty pleasure that must be!" said the Hen: "why, you have gone stark mad, I believe. Ask the Cat—he is the wisest of any that I know—how he would like to go floating on the water, or diving down under it. I won't mention myself. But go and ask our old Dame; there is no one in the world wiser than she is: do you think she would like floating about, and getting the water over her head?"

"You don't understand me," said the Duckling.

"Oh, we don't understand you, don't we? then pray who is to understand you? Do you mean that you are wiser than the Cat, and the old Dame, not to mention

¹ A Danish phrase, meaning to *purr* like a spinning-wheel.

myself. Don't be giving yourself airs : but be grateful for the mercies that have been shown you ! Have you not been admitted into a warm room, and into society that can improve your mind ? But you are a simpleton, and there is no pleasure in having anything to do with you. You may trust what I say. I mean you well. I tell you disagreeable things : and that is the best proof of one's true friends ! Only try now to lay eggs, and to learn how to spin and sparkle !"

" I think I will go out into the wide world," said the Duckling.

" Go, by all means !" said the Hen.

And so the Duckling went. He skimmed along the surface of the water, and dived down to the bottom of it : but still every creature looked down upon him for his ugliness.

Now the autumn came. The forest leaves turned brown and yellow, and the wind caught hold of them, and whirled them in a dance, and the sky had a cold look in it. The clouds hung heavy with hail and snowflakes, and the raven stood on the hedge, and croaked " augh ! augh !" from sheer cold. Ay, it was enough to chill one to think of it : and the poor Duckling did not get on well at all.

One evening, as the sun went down in all its blessed glory, a flock of fine large birds came out from behind the bushes. The Duckling had never seen such lovely beings before. They were glittering white, with long and supple necks. They were swans ! They uttered a strange cry, spread out their long splendid wings, and flew away from the cold plains to warmer lands, and to open waters. They mounted high—so high—into the air ; and the ugly Duckling felt strangely moved. He whirled round in the water like a wheel ; stretched his neck after them, as if he would follow them, and broke into a scream so shrill and strange, that he was quite frightened at it himself. Oh, never could he forget those beautiful birds, those happy birds ! and when his eyes could no longer follow them, he dived down to the bottom, and was almost out of his mind. He did not know what the birds were called, nor whither they had flown ; yet still he yearned for them, as he had never yearned for any one before. He did not envy them : how could he ever dream of such beauties for himself ! He would have been glad if only the ducks in the yard had borne with him, poor ugly creature that he was.

The winter was getting so cold, so cold ! the Duckling had to swim about in the water, to keep it from freezing fast all over. But every night the swimming space grew smaller and smaller. It froze till the ice-crust cracked again. The Duckling had to use his legs well to prevent the waters closing. At last he got faint and lay stock still, and he was frozen hard to the ice.

Early in the morning a peasant passed by. He caught sight of the bird, and went out, and with his wooden shoe he broke the ice all round it, and took it home to his wife. There it came to life again.

The children wanted to play with the Duckling, but he fancied they were going to do him a mischief ; and he ran in his terror into a milk dish, and splashed the milk all

about the room. The goodwife screeched, and clapped her hands, and tossed them in the air, and then he flew into the butter-trough; and next down into the meal tub; and up he got again, and there was a figure of fun! The goodwife yelled, and struck at him with the tongs: the children went tumbling over each other to catch him, and they laughed, and shrieked, and laughed again! Luckily the door stood open; he bolted out in the new-fallen snow, fell down among some bushes, and there he lay in a swoon.

But it would be too dismal to relate all the want and misery that he had to suffer throughout the hard winter. He was lying among the rushes of a marsh, when the sun began to shine warm again: the larks were singing: it was beautiful spring!

Then suddenly he lifted his wings: they sounded fuller than before: and they bore him with a mighty swoop away. He hardly knew what he was doing, till he found himself in a large garden, where the apple-trees stood in bloom, and the lilacs shed their odours, and fringed the winding water-courses with their long green sprays. Oh, what beauty, what freshness of the spring! and right before him, out of the bushes, came three white swans. They ruffled out their plumes, and thus glided lightly over the water. The Duckling recognized the glorious creatures, and a strange sadness fell upon him.

"I will fly to them, those kingly birds: and they will hew me to death, because I, who am so ugly, venture to draw nigh them. But be it so! better to be killed by them than to be pinched by ducks, pecked by fowls, kicked by the poultry-maid, and suffer all the miseries of another winter!" He said, and flew into the water, and swam towards the glorious swans. They saw him come, and rushed with rustling plumage to meet him. "Only kill me!" said the poor creature, bowing his head down to the water, and awaiting death: but what did he see in the clear water? Beneath him he saw his own image; he was no longer a sooty-grey bird, hideous and ungainly; he was himself a Swan!

It matters not being hatched in a duck-yard, if one has only been laid in a swan's egg.

He felt all the happier now for the want and woe he had been suffering; now he could value the whole of his good fortune, and all the beauty that greeted him. And the great swans swam around him, and stroked him with their beaks.

There were little children come out into the garden. They cast bread and corn into the water, and the smallest one cried out: "There is a new one!" and the others chimed in, saying; "Yes, there is a new one come!" and they clapped their hands and danced round and round, and ran for father and mother: and then there was casting of bread and of cake into the water, and they all said: "The new one is the handsomest! so young and so beautiful!" and the old swans bowed before him.

Then he felt quite abashed, and drew his head behind his wings, he scarce knew

what to think : he was only too happy, but not proud at all, for a good heart is never proud. He remembered how he had been hunted and hooted ; and now he heard them all say that he was the most beautiful of all beautiful birds. And the lilacs bent their branches to him, down to the water ; and the sun shone bright and warm. Then he ruffled his plumes, and arched his slender neck, and rejoiced in his heart, saying : "Such happiness I never so much as dreamed of, when I was the Ugly Duckling."





THE FELLOW-TRAVELLER.



FOR Johannes was wretched indeed; for his father was very ill, and there was no hope of his recovering. They were left alone together in the small room; the lamp on the table was nearly burnt out; and it was very late in the evening.

"Thou hast been a good son," said the sick father; "Our Lord will be sure to help thee on in the world." And he gazed with gentle earnest eyes at him; drew a long deep breath, and died—even as if he had fallen asleep. But Johannes wept; now he had no one left in the whole world, neither father nor mother, neither brother nor sister. Poor Johannes! he leaned kneeling over the bed, kissed his dead father's hand, and wept bitter tears. At last his eyes closed, and he fell asleep, his head resting against the hard bedstead.

Then he dreamed a strange dream. He saw the sun and moon bow before him; and he saw his father all safe and sound again, and heard him laughing as he used to laugh when he was thoroughly enjoying himself. A lovely girl, with a gold crown on her long rich hair, gave her hand to Johannes, while his father said: "Dost thou see what a fair bride thou hast won? she is the most beautiful maiden in all the world!" Then he awoke, and all that glory had vanished. His father lay dead and cold in the bed, and there was no one else near them: poor Johannes!

The next week the dead man was buried. Johannes walked close behind the coffin; never again should he see that kind father who had loved him so well! he heard how they threw the earth on the coffin; now he saw the last corner of it; one more shovelful of earth and that was hidden too. He felt as if his heart must break to pieces he was so wretched. Those around him sang a psalm; it had a fine solemn sound, and the tears rose into the eyes of Johannes; he wept, and that did him good. The sun shone fair on the green trees, as if it would say: "Thou must not be so wretched, Johannes! look at the blue sky, how beautiful it is! up yonder is thy father now, praying to God that things may go well with thee!"

"I will always be good," said Johannes; "then I shall go up, some day, to my father. And oh, what joy it will be, when we see each other again! I shall have so much to tell him, and then he will show me so many things, and teach me so much about all that is beautiful in heaven, just as he taught me here on earth. Oh, what joy it will be!"

Johannes pictured this all to himself so vividly, that he smiled, even while the tears were running down his cheeks. The small birds sat in the chestnut-trees, and twittered and chirruped, they were so delighted. And yet they took a part in the funeral too; but then they knew so well that the dead man was now in heaven; had larger and handsomer wings than their own; and was happy now, because he had been good here on earth; and that was what delighted them. Johannes watched them flying from the green trees far out into the world; and a strong desire seized him to fly after them. But first he carved a great wooden cross, to plant on his father's grave; and when in the evening he brought it thither, he found the grave strewn with sand and flowers. This had been done by some of the neighbours; for they all loved the kind father who was now dead.

Early next morning Johannes packed his little knapsack; and in his belt he stowed away his whole inheritance, consisting of fifty rix-dollars, and a few silver skillings; and thus equipped, he was ready to wander forth into the world. First, however, he went into the churchyard, to his father's grave, and repeated the Lord's Prayer, and said: "Farewell, dear father! I will always be good, and then thou canst always pray the good God that things may go well with me!"

In the open country, where Johannes now set off walking, all the flowers looked fresh and beautiful in the warm sunshine; and they nodded in the breeze as if they would say: "Welcome into the green fields! is it not charming here?" But Johannes turned round once more to see the old church, where he had been baptized as a baby, where every Sunday he had been to church with his old father, and sung his psalm. Then high up the tower, in one of the loopholes, he spied the church-brownie, with his little red pointed cap, standing and shading his face with his bent arm, to keep the sun from scorching his eyes. Johannes nodded farewell to him; and little brownie swung his red cap, laid his hand on his heart, and kissed his fingers ever so many times, to show he wished him ever so many good things, and the best of good luck at his journey's end.

Johannes thought of all the fine sights he was going to see in the great glorious world; and he went on and on, further than he had ever gone before. He knew none of the towns he was passing through, or the people he was meeting. He was now far out among strangers.

The first night he had to sleep on a haystack in the open field; he had no other bed. But this was delicious, he thought, the king himself could not be better off. The whole meadow, with its brook, its haystack, and the blue sky above them, was a noble bedroom. The green grass, dotted with pink and white flowers, was the carpet: the elder-bushes

and sweet-briers were the flower-stands; and, instead of a wash-hand basin he had the brook itself, brimming with clear fresh water, where the rushes nodded at him, bidding him both good-night and good-morning. The moon made a famous lamp for him, high up under the blue ceiling, and it would not set the curtains on fire; Johannes could go to sleep with an easy mind. And so he did; and he did not awake till the sun rose, and all the little birds around him sang, "Good-morning! good-morning! are you not getting up yet?"

The bells were ringing for church. It was Sunday. People were going to hear the priest. Johannes fell in with them, sang a psalm, and listened to the Word of God. It seemed as if he were in his own church, where he had been baptized, and had sung psalms with his father.

Out in the churchyard there were very many graves; and on some of them were rank weeds growing. Then Johannes thought of his father's grave, that would soon come to look like them, now that he could no longer weed and tend it. So he set to work, and pulled up the weeds, raised the wooden crosses that had fallen, and laid the wreaths, which the wind had carried off the graves, in their proper places again. "Some one," he thought, "may perhaps do the same to my father's grave, now that I cannot do it!"

Just outside the churchyard gate stood an old beggar, leaning on his crutch. Johannes gave him the few silver skillings he had; and then, happy and contented, he went further out into the wide world.

Towards evening there was a terrible storm. Johannes hastened forward to get somewhere under shelter. But it was quite dark when he reached a small church that stood quite by itself upon a hillock. Luckily the door was left ajar, and Johannes slipped in; here he would stay till the storm abated.

"I will just sit down in the corner," he said; "I am quite tired out, and it will do me good to rest a little while." So he sat down, clasped his hands, and said his evening prayer; and, before he knew what he was doing, he slept and dreamed; while it thundered and lightened outside.

When he woke again, it was about midnight. The storm was over, and the moon shone in through the window. On the middle of the church floor stood an open coffin, with a corpse in it, waiting to be buried. Johannes was not at all frightened, for he had a good conscience; and he knew well enough that the dead hurt nobody,—it is only the living wicked ones who do us harm; and two of these wicked ones were here, standing close to the dead man, who had been left in the church till the grave was ready for him. They were just about to do him an outrage, not to let him rest in his coffin, but to cast him out of the church-door, the poor dead man!

"What are you doing that for?" asked Johannes. "It would be a sin and shame to do that; let him rest, in Jesu's name!"

"Oh, rubbish!" said the two ruffians; "he has cheated us; he's been owing us money that he couldn't pay; and now he's gone dead into the bargain, and we shall not get a skilling. We've a right to pay him out for that; and he shall lie like a dog outside the church door."

"I have only got fifty rix-dollars," said Johannes, "that is all my inheritance. But I will give it you and welcome, if you sincerely promise me to leave the poor dead man in peace. I shall get on, I trust, without the money. I have got sound sturdy limbs of my own; and our Lord will always be my succour."

"Oh well!" said the filthy fellows, "if you are willing to pay his debts, we are willing enough to leave him alone; you may be quite sure of that!" and so they took the money Johannes offered them, laughed aloud in his face at his simplicity, and went their way. But Johannes laid the corpse straight again in the coffin, folded its hands, and bade it farewell: and then, as contented as ever, he set out again, and entered the great forest.

All around him, wherever the moonbeams could slip in between the trees, he saw pretty little elves playing merry pranks together. They were not in the least disturbed at his approach; for they knew that he was a kind and innocent youth, and it is only bad people who are not allowed to see the elves. They were no bigger than one's finger, and they had long yellow locks fastened up with golden combs. Some of them stood in couples, balancing each other on the heavy dewdrops, which spangled the leaves and the tall grasses. Now and then the dewdrop would trickle down, and they would both slide down with it into the long stalks of grass; and then there was laughter and hubbub among the other little imps. Oh! it was great fun. They sang too; and Johannes made out, quite plainly, all the pretty songs he had learned as a little boy. Large many-coloured spiders, with silver crowns on their heads, were made to spin them long hanging bridges, and whole palaces, from one hedge to another; and these, when the thick fine dew fell upon them, sparkled like glass in the bright moonlight. Thus things went on till the sun rose. Then the little elves crept into the flower-buds; the wind took hold of the bridges and palaces; and they floated about in the air, in the shape of large cobwebs.

Johannes had just stepped out of the wood, when a deep voice shouted after him, "Halloo, comrade, whither away?"

"Out into the wide world," Johannes replied. "I am a poor lad, and have neither father nor mother; but our Lord will be sure to help me."

"I am going into the wide world too," said the Stranger, "suppose we form a fellowship?"

"With all my heart," said Johannes. And so they became fellow-travellers. They soon grew fond of one another, for they were good fellows, both of them. But Johannes quickly discovered that the Stranger was much cleverer than himself. He had been over most of the world, and could talk about almost everything.

The sun was already high when they sat down under a spreading tree to eat their breakfast: and at the same moment up came an old woman. Old she was indeed, leaning on a crutch, and bent quite double. On her back she bore a bundle of faggots, which she had gathered in the forest: her apron was pinned up; and Johannes noticed three great bunches of fern and willow-sprigs, sticking out of the corners. Just as she came up to them, her foot slipped, and she fell over with a shrill scream: she had broken her leg, poor old woman!

Johannes at once proposed they should carry her home to where she lived: but the Stranger opened his knapsack, and took out a gallipot, saying he had a salve here, that would make her leg whole and sound, so that she could walk home, and as easily too as if she had never broken her leg. But in payment of this he demanded the three bunches that she carried in her apron.

"That will be payment in full!" said the old crone, nodding strangely with her head. She was not well pleased to part with her ferns and willow-sprigs: but it was no fun at all, to lie down with a broken leg; so she gave him the bunches; and as soon as he had rubbed her leg with the ointment, the old dame arose, and walked brisker than ever. Such was the effect of that salve. But it was not by any means to be had of the apothecary.

"What can you want with those sprigs?" asked Johannes of his Fellow Traveller.

"They are three nice nosegays," he said, "just to my taste! for I am a queer fellow."

And so they went on a good bit further.

"Heigh! what a storm is working up!" said Johannes, pointing straight before him, "there are some terribly thick clouds out yonder."

"They are not clouds," said the Fellow-Traveller, "they are mountains—the beautiful high mountains, where one gets right above the clouds, up into the fresh air. It is splendid, I assure you, to be there! To-morrow we shall be so far out into the world!"

The mountains were further off, though, than they looked. It took the rest of the day to reach them. And then the dark woods seemed to mount up right against the sky, together with crags, each as big as a whole town. It would be a long and hard piece of work to cross over them. So Johannes and the Fellow-Traveller went into an inn to have a good rest, and to gather strength for the next day's journey.

They found the large tap-room of the inn crowded with people; for a man was there with a puppet-show. He had just set up his little theatre, and the people sat in a ring around him to see the play. In the front row a fat old butcher had taken a seat, and the best one too. His bull-dog, a grim-looking fellow, sat beside him, and made great eyes at the show, like everybody else.

Now the comedy began: and it was a genteel comedy, with a king and a queen in it. They sat on a velvet throne, and had gold crowns on their heads, and long trains

to their robes—for these they could afford. The most elegant wooden dolls, with glass eyes and long moustaches, were stationed at all the doors and windows; and kept opening and shutting them, to change the air in the apartment. A very beautiful comedy it was, and there was nothing tragic about it; but just as the Queen rose up and was stepping across the floor, then—goodness knows what came over the big bull-dog, but—the fat butcher not having hold of him—he cleared the stage at a spring, and caught the Queen by her slender waist, till it said “crick, crack!” It was quite shocking!

The poor showman was very much alarmed and distressed about his Queen, for she was the prettiest doll of all, and now that beast of a bull-dog had bitten her head off! But when the rest of the spectators were gone, the Stranger, who had come with Johannes, said that he could soon set her up again. And so he took out his gallipot, and smeared the doll with the same salve that had cured the old woman, when she had broken her leg. As soon as the doll was smeared, she was whole again. Ay! and now she could move all her limbs of herself: there was no need of pulling any wires; Dolly was like a living human being, all except this, that she could not talk. The showman was immensely pleased: now he might spare himself the trouble of holding the doll; she would dance if he left her alone. There were none of the others who could do that.

When it was late at night, and all the people in the inn were gone to bed, there was such a dreadfully deep sighing heard, and it went on so long, that everybody got up to see what it could be. The showman rushed off to his little theatre, for it seemed to be there that the sighing came from. All the wooden dolls lay mixed together, the king and the guardsmen; and it was they who were sighing so piteously, with their great glass eyes starting out of them; they longed so to be smeared like the Queen, that they also might stir about a little. The Queen kept bending nearly on her knees, and lifting her pretty gold crown in the air, as if imploring: “Take this, only smear my consort and my courtiers!” Then the poor man who owned the puppet-show and all the puppets, was quite moved to tears, he was so sorry for them; and he hastened to offer the Fellow-Traveller, to give him all the money he might take at the next night’s performance, if he would only smear four or five of his prettiest dolls. But the Fellow-Traveller said, that he asked for nothing but the great sabre, that hung at the showman’s side. It was given him, and he smeared six dolls; and they began dancing at once with so much spirit that all the girls—the real human girls—who stood looking on, caught the infection, and danced too. And the coachman danced with the kitchen-maid, and the waiter with the parlour-maid. All the strangers danced, and so did the tongs and shovel, though the last couple tumbled down at the first step they tried. In short, the whole inn made a merry night of it.

Next morning Johannes and his Fellow-Traveller left the rest of the company, and took their way up the high mountains and through the long pine forests. They climbed

higher and higher, till the church towers beneath them looked like small red berries, lying scattered in a breadth of green; and they could see far away, over many, many miles of country, where they had never been. Such a grand view of this fair world Johannes had never had before. The sun shone warm from the blue vault of heaven; and the hunters blew their horns among the mountains: and all was so beautiful and blest, that he shed tears of joy, and could not help saying, "Oh, thou dear Lord God! if I might only kiss thee! because thou art so good to us all, and hast given us all the beauty of this world."

The Fellow-Traveller, too, stood with folded hands, and looked over the forests and the towns that lay in the rich sunshine. Presently there came sounds overhead, strangely beautiful. They looked up, and lo! a great white swan was floating in the air, and glorious he looked, and he sang as they had never heard any bird sing before. But his voice grew fainter and still fainter; he bowed his head, and sank slowly down before their feet, and there he lay dead, that glorious bird!

"Two such splendid wings as these," said the Fellow-Traveller, "so large and so white are worth money. I'll take them with me. Now you see it was well I got the sabre." And with one stroke he cut both wings off the dead swan, and he carried them away.

They journeyed over the mountains for many miles. At last they saw a large city, with more than a hundred towers, that shone like silver in the sunshine. In the centre of the town rose a splendid marble palace, roofed with ruddy gold; and here dwelt the King.

Johannes and the Fellow-Traveller would not enter the city at once, but halted at an inn outside to smarten themselves up, for they wished to look decent before they appeared in the streets. The innkeeper here told them that the King was a good fellow, who would never do harm to any mortal soul, but his daughter, —heaven help us!—ah, she was a wicked princess! Good looks she had in plenty, nobody could look prettier and sweeter, but what was the good of that when she was a wicked, cruel witch, who had caused many a handsome prince to lose his life. She had given all men leave to pay court to her; whoever turned up, whether he were prince or beggar, it was all one and the same, he had to guess three things that she asked him. If he could do this, she would marry him, and he should be king of the country, when her father died; but if he could not guess the three things rightly, she would have him hanged or beheaded; so wicked and cruel was the beautiful Princess! Her father, the old King, was terribly grieved at this, but he could not hinder her being so cruel, for he had once promised he would never interfere in the least with her sweethearts, she might do with them just what she pleased. Every time that a prince had come to try and win the Princess, he never had managed to guess rightly, and so he was either hanged or beheaded. Well, they gave him good warning first, to be sure, and he might then have left the wooing

alone. The old King was so vexed at all this sorrow and suffering, that every year he knelt on his knees a whole day, with all his soldiers, praying that the Princess might turn good; but there was no change in her. The old wives, who drank drops of brandy, coloured it black before they drank it; this was their way of mourning, and they did their best to prove it.

"That hateful Princess!" said Johannes, "she really deserves a sound whipping! It would do her a great deal of good! If I were only the old King, she should squeal like a whole litter of stuck pigs!"

At that moment, they heard the people outside shouting "hurrah!" It was the Princess coming, and she really was so beautiful that all the people forgot how cruel she was, and kept shouting "hurrah!" Twelve handsome maidens, all in white silk, and each with a golden tulip in her hand, rode on coal-black horses on each side of her. The Princess herself had a milk-white steed, with trappings of diamonds and rubies, her riding-dress was woven of pure gold, the whip in her hand resembled a sunbeam, the gold crown on her head seemed a cluster of the stars of heaven, and her mantle was made up of thousands of butterfly-wings. Yet still she was much more beautiful than all her clothes.

The moment Johannes saw her, he turned as red in the face as running blood, and could hardly utter a word, for the Princess was the very image of the beautiful girl with a gold crown on her head whom he had dreamed of the night his father died. He was so struck at the sight, he could not help falling in love with her. "There could be no truth at all in it," he said, "that she was a wicked witch, who had people hanged or beheaded if they could not guess her riddles; any one may pay court to her, they say; even the poorest beggar! Then I will certainly go up to the palace! I cannot help it!"

They all advised him not to go; he would only fare like the rest, they said. The Fellow-Traveller, amongst the others, tried to dissuade him. But Johannes said he thought it would be all right, brushed his shoes and his coat, washed his face and hands, combed his glossy, yellow hair, and then walked alone into the city, and straight up to the palace.

"Come in," said the old King, when Johannes knocked at the door. Johannes opened it, and the old King, in his dressing-gown and embroidered slippers, came forward to meet him. His gold crown was on his head, his sceptre in one hand, and the golden globe in the other. "Wait a bit!" said he, getting the globe under his arm, in order to shake hands with Johannes. But as soon as he heard that this was a new suitor, he began to weep so violently that both globe and sceptre rolled down on the floor, and he was obliged to wipe his eyes with his dressing-gown! Poor old King!

"Leave it alone," he said, "or you'll come to a bad end like the other ones. Come and see what that means!" And he took Johannes into the pleasure-grounds

THE OLD KING POINTING OUT TO
THE STUDENT THE WICKED PRINCESS'S
GARDEN.



of the Princess, and a horrid sight was there! In every tree there hung three or four princes, who had come to woo the Princess, but had not been able to guess her riddles. The skeletons clattered so in every gust, that all the small birds were scared away, and never dared enter that garden. All the flowers were tied up to human bones instead of sticks, and grinning skulls served as flower-pots. This was something like a garden for a Princess!

"Now you can see it yourself!" said the old King. "This is the end you will come to, just like those whom you see here. Then pray do leave it alone! you make me really quite miserable, I take it so much to heart!"

Johannes kissed the hand of the good old King, and said he felt sure it must all go well, he was so very much in love with the beautiful Princess.

And now came the Princess herself, and all her ladies, riding into the palace-yard. So they went out and wished her good morning. She looked lovely; and she shook hands with Johannes, and he fell deeper in love than ever. No, she could never be the cruel wicked witch that people called her! They went up into the saloon, and little pages handed round preserves and gingerbread nuts. But the old King was so dispirited, he could not eat anything; and the gingerbread nuts besides were too hard for his teeth.

It was now settled that Johannes should come up to the palace again next morning; then the judges and the whole council would be assembled, and would hear whether he guessed right or wrong. If he guessed right he would still have to come up two days more. But as yet there had not been one who could guess the first riddle right, and so every one had forfeited his life.

Johannes was not at all anxious about the trial. Indeed, he was in high spirits; thought of nothing but the beautiful Princess; and was firmly persuaded that the good God would be sure to help him,—in what manner he did not know, and did not choose to consider. He danced along the road as he went back to the inn, where the Fellow-Traveller awaited him.

Johannes was never tired of telling how gracious the Princess had been towards him, and how perfect was her beauty. Most eagerly did he long for the morrow, when he might go to the palace again, and try his luck at guessing.

But the Fellow-Traveller shook his head, and was quite vexed. "I am so fond of you," he said, "and we might have kept together a good time longer, and now I must lose you already! My poor dear Johannes, I feel half inclined to cry, but I won't damp your joy, on this perchance the last evening that we are to spend together. We will be merry, right merry! to-morrow, when you are gone, I may weep as much as I please."

The whole of the city soon heard the tidings that a new suitor had come to the Princess: and for this there was a general mourning. The theatres were closed, the pastry-cooks put black crape on their sugar pigs, and the King and the priests grovelled

on their knees in the churches:—such and so great was the mourning; for Johannes, they deemed, could never hope to fare better than the rest of the suitors.

Later in the evening the Fellow-Traveller mixed a large bowl of punch, and said to Johannes, that now they would be right merry, and drink the health of the Princess. But when Johannes had emptied two glasses he got so drowsy, that he could not possibly hold his eyelids up: he fell fast asleep. The Fellow-Traveller lifted him quietly from the chair, and laid him in bed: and as soon as the night was dark, he took the two great wings he had cut off from the swan, and fastened them on his own shoulders; then he put in his pocket the largest of the switches he had got from the old woman, who had fallen and broken her leg, and he opened the window, and flew over the city right up to the palace, where he crouched down in a niche, just under the window-sill of the Princess's bedroom.

There was perfect stillness throughout the city. It struck the three-quarters before twelve. The window opened, and out flew the Princess in a loose white mantle, and with long black wings, and she sped over the city towards a huge mountain. But the Fellow-Traveller made himself invisible, that she might not see him, and flew close behind, and whipped her with his switch, drawing blood at every stroke. Hugh! but that was a fine flight through the air! the wind caught her mantle, and it swelled out like a large sail, with the moon shining through it.

"How it hails! how it hails!" cried the Princess, every time she felt the switch, —and she got what she richly deserved.—At length she reached the mountain and knocked at it. With a rolling like thunder the mountain opened, and the Princess entered. The Fellow-Traveller followed, for no one could see him; he was still invisible. They passed through a long wide gallery, the walls of which glistened strangely, for thousands of red-hot spiders were running up and down, glowing like fire. Now they came into a large hall built of gold and silver. Flowers as large as sunflowers, some red and some blue, hung brilliant on the walls; but no one could pluck them, for their stalks were foul venomous snakes, and the blossoms were fire that they breathed out of their mouths. The ceiling was thickly set with glow-worms, and with bright blue bats that never ceased flapping their wings, and this had a strange effect. In the middle of the floor there was a throne, supported upon four horse skeletons, that had trappings made of the red fire-spiders. The throne itself was of milk-white glass, and the cushions were small black mice, biting each other by the tails. Above it was a canopy of rose-red cobwebs, studded with the prettiest little green flies, that sparkled like precious stones. On the throne was seated an old Troll, with a crown on his ugly head, and a sceptre in his hand. He kissed the Princess on her brow, and made her sit on the throne beside him: and then began the music. Great black grasshoppers played the jews-harp, and the owl beat himself on the stomach, having no other drum to beat. It was a funny concert. Little will-o'-the-wisps, each with a goblin fire in his cap, danced round and round the hall. No one could see the Fellow-Traveller; while he, on his part,

THE WICKED PRINCESS IN HER GARDEN.



had stationed himself just behind the throne, and could see and hear everything. The courtiers that now came flocking in were as smart and stately as one could wish; but whoever looked closely soon made out what they really were. They were nothing but broomsticks, with cabbage-heads stuck a-top of them, which the Troll had bewitched into life, and decked out with embroidered clothes. But perhaps it was all the same: they were only wanted for state occasions.

When the dancing had gone on for some time, the Princess told the Troll that she had a new suitor; and asked what she should think of to ask him next morning, when he came up to the palace.

"Hark'ee!" replied the Troll, "I will tell thee what; choose something slight and simple, and he will be all the less likely to hit upon it. Think of one of thy shoes! Now *that* he will never guess. Then have his head chopped off; but don't forget, when thou comest out here to-morrow night, to bring me his eyes; I want them for supper!"

The Princess curtsied low, and said she would certainly not forget the eyes. Then the Troll opened the mountain, and she flew home again. But the Fellow-Traveller was close behind, and he scourged her so hard with the switch that she gave deep groans at such a hailstorm, and made all the haste she could to reach her window and her bedroom. Then the Fellow-Traveller flew back to the inn, where Johannes was still asleep, took off his wings, and lay down on the bed himself; and surely he might well be tired.

It was quite early in the morning when Johannes awoke and got up. The Fellow-Traveller got up too, and said he had been dreaming all night a wonderful dream about the Princess and her shoe; and he charged Johannes by all means to ask the Princess if she had not been thinking of one of her shoes. Now this, as we know, was what he had heard from the Troll in the mountain: yet he did not choose to say so to Johannes, but only charged him to ask whether she had been thinking of one of her shoes.

"I may as well ask one thing as another," said Johannes, "and perchance what you have dreamt may prove true; for I always have believed that our Lord is sure to help me. Nevertheless, I will bid thee now farewell, for if I guess wrong I shall never see thee again."

So they kissed each other, and Johannes went into the city, and up to the palace. The large state-room was crowded with people, and the judges sat in their arm-chairs, with eider-down cushions to rest their heads upon, as they had so much to think about. The old King rose up, and dried his eyes with a white pocket-handkerchief. Now the Princess came in. She was much more beautiful than the day before, and she gave a kind greeting to the whole assembly: but to Johannes she held out her hand, saying, "Good morrow, dear friend!"

Well, now Johannes was called upon to guess what she had been thinking of.

Heavens, how tenderly she looked at him! But as soon as she heard him say, "One of your shoes!" she turned white as chalk, and trembled all over. But there was no help for it, he had guessed right!

Hilliho, how glad was the old King! He cut a somersault that was long remembered: and all the people clapped their hands for him and for Johannes, who had now guessed right the first time.

The Fellow-Traveller beamed with delight when he heard how well things had turned out. But Johannes clasped his hands, and thanked the good God, who would surely help him again on the two following days. Next day the second guess was to be made.

The evening passed very like the previous one. As soon as Johannes slept, the Fellow-Traveller flew after the Princess towards the mountain, scourging her even fiercer than the first time, for now he had taken two switches. No one could see him, while he heard and saw everything. The Princess was now told to think of her glove; and this again he told Johannes, as if it were a dream. Thus Johannes guessed right again, and gave redoubled joy to the palace. The whole court cut somersaults, just as they had seen the King do on the former occasion. But the Princess threw herself down upon a sofa, and would not speak a single word.

Now all hinged upon this, whether Johannes could guess right the third time. If he succeeded—ah, then he was to be the husband of the beautiful Princess, and heir to the whole kingdom! But if he guessed wrong, he would lose his life, and the Troll would feed on his fine blue eyes.

On that evening Johannes went early to bed, repeated his evening prayer, and slept soundly. But the Fellow-Traveller bound the wings on his shoulders, buckled the sabre to his girdle, took all the three switches with him, and flew to the palace.

It was pitch dark. It blew till the tiles flew off the houses: and the trees in the garden, where the skeletons hung, bent like reeds before the blast. It lightened every moment; and the thunder rolled, as if it were one long peal that was lasting all the night. The window opened, and the Princess flew forth. She was pale as death; but she laughed at the tempest, and only thought it scarcely wild enough. Her white mantle blew flapping in the air like a great sail. But the Fellow-Traveller scourged her with his three switches, till the blood dripped down upon the ground, and she could hardly keep flying any longer. At last she got as far as the mountain.

"It blows and hails!" she said, "never have I been out in such a storm!" "One *may* have too much of a good thing!" replied the Troll. And now she told him that Johannes had guessed right the second time; if he did the same the next morning, he would win the game; and never more could she come out to the mountain trolls, and never work her witchcrafts any more! This vexed her bitterly.

"He shall not guess right again!" said the Troll. "I will tell thee something he can never have dreamt of; or else he must be a greater wizard than myself.

But now let us be merry!" And he took the Princess by both her hands and whirled her in the dance, among all the imps and hobgoblins that thronged the hall. The red spiders too sprang merrily up and down the walls, and the fire-flowers threw showers of sparks. The owl beat his drum; the crickets piped; and the black grasshoppers played their jews'-harps. It was a jolly ball!

When they had danced for some time, the Princess had to leave, or she would be missed at the palace. The Troll said he would see her home, so they might have a little more time together.

Away they flew in the storm, and the Fellow-Traveller used up his three switches in scourging them. Never had the Troll been out in such a hailstorm before. Just outside the palace he said farewell to the Princess, whispering as he left her: "Think of my head!" But the Fellow-Traveller caught the words; and no sooner did the Princess slip through her bedroom window, and the Troll turn round to fly back again, than he seized him by the long black beard, and swung his sabre, and whipped off his hideous Troll's head close to his shoulders, before the Troll had a notion of what was coming. The trunk he cast into the sea to the fishes; but the head he merely doused in the water, then wrapt it in his silk handkerchief, took it home with him to the inn, and lay down to sleep.

Next morning he gave the bundle to Johannes; but he told him not to untie it till the Princess asked what it was she had been thinking of.

There was such a crowd in the state-room of the palace, that they pressed each other like radishes in a bunch. The councillors sat in their easy-chairs with the soft pillows; the old King had new clothes on, and his gold crown and sceptre had been freshly polished: everything, in short, made a goodly show, except the Princess; she was pale; and wore black, as if she were going to a funeral.

"What have I been thinking of?" she asked Johannes; and straight he untied the handkerchief, and was horror-struck himself when he saw the filthy Troll's head. And a shudder thrilled through them all, for it was a ghastly sight. But the Princess sat like a statue, and could not utter a word. At last she rose and gave her hand to Johannes, for indeed he had guessed aright. She looked neither at him, nor yet at any one, but sighed forth very low: "Now thou art my lord! this evening we will hold our nuptials."

"Well now, that I like!" said the old King. "That is just as it should be!" All the people shouted hurrah; the city band made music in the streets; the church bells were set ringing, and the pastry-cooks took the crape off their sugar pigs, for now there was general holiday. Three oxen, roasted whole, and stuffed with ducks and chickens, were served up in the market-place: everyone might cut himself a slice. The fountains flowed with delicious wines; and if one bought a penny bun at a baker's, one got six large cakes into the bargain—ay, and cakes with plums in them.

In the evening the whole city was illuminated; and the soldiers fired cannons, and

the boys fired crackers. There was eating and drinking, and clinking of glasses, in the palace, where all the fine lords and pretty ladies danced together; far out in the street you might hear how they were singing:—

“ Here are many bonny lasses
Waiting till the fiddles sound :
Jovial fiddlers, leave your glasses !
Bonny lass ! come twirl around !
Trip, and skip, and stamp the ground,
Till both thy feet are shoeless oh ! ”

But the Princess was still a witch, and had no liking at all for Johannes. This the Fellow-Traveller remembered: and so he gave Johannes three feathers of the swan’s wing, and a little flask with a few drops in it; and he told him that he must have a large vessel of water set close to the bridal bed; and then, when the Princess was about to step up into the bed, he must push her into the water, and dip her down in it thrice: first, however, the three feathers and the drops must be cast into the water. Then the Princess would be freed from the spell, and would love Johannes dearly.

Johannes did exactly as the Fellow-Traveller had counselled him. The Princess screamed aloud as he dipped her down under the water, and struggled up under his hands in the shape of a great coal-black swan with fiery eyes. The second time she came up, the swan was white, all except one black ring, which she had around her neck. Johannes prayed fervently to our Lord, and let the water for the third time rush over the swan, and the next moment she was changed into the most beautiful of all Princesses. She was even handsomer than before; and thanked him, with tears in her sweet eyes, for having broken her enchantment.

Next morning came the old King, together with all his courtiers; and congratulations went on till late in the day. Last of all came the Fellow-Traveller, with his stick in his hand, and his knapsack on his shoulders. Johannes kissed him again and again, and said he must not go away; he must remain with them, for he was the author of all this happiness. But the Fellow-Traveller shook his head, and said softly and lovingly:—
“ Nay; my time is up. I have but paid my debt. Dost thou remember the dead man, whom the two wicked ones were about to disturb? Thou gavest all thou hadst, that he might be left in peace. I am that dead man ! ”

And when he had said this, he vanished.

The bridal feast lasted a whole month. Johannes and the Princess loved one another truly and dearly; and the old King lived many happy days, and let his little grandchildren ride “ a cock-horse ” on his knee, and play with his sceptre.—But Johannes was king over the whole kingdom.



THE LITTLE MERMAID.



FAIR out at sea the water is as blue as the petals of the brightest cornflower, and clear as the purest glass; but it is very deep—deeper than any cable can sound; and many church-towers would have to be set one above another to reach from the bottom to the surface of the water. Down below there dwell the Mermen.

Now you must not imagine that the sea-floor there is nothing but bare white sand. No; the strangest trees and plants grow there, so light and flexible in stalk and blade, that they move with every motion of the water, as if they were alive. The fishes, great and small, flit among the boughs, like the birds in the upper world. In the deepest spot of all stands the palace of the Sea-King. The walls are of coral, and the long lancet-windows of transparent amber; and the roof is of mussel-shells, that open and shut as the waters rise and fall; and this looks charming, for the shells contain glittering pearls, everyone of which would make a fine figure in a queen's crown.

The Sea-King down here had been now for many years a widower; but his old mother kept home for him. She was a wise woman, but proud of her high birth, and so she wore twelve oysters on her tail, while the other great ladies might only wear six. In other respects she deserved high praise, especially for her devotion to her grand-daughters, the little Sea-Princesses. They were six lovely children, but the youngest was the loveliest of all; her skin was as clear and fine as a rose-leaf, her eyes as blue as the deepest sea; but, like the rest, she had no feet, but her body ended in a fish's tail.

All the day long they used to play in the palace, in the great halls where living flowers grew out of the walls. Then the amber-windows were opened, and in would swim the fish, as the birds fly in to us when we open to them. But the fish swam right up to the little Princesses, and ate from their hands, and let themselves be stroked.

Round the palace lay a large garden, with fiery red and dark blue trees. The fruit glittered like gold, and the flowers like flickering fire, while they kept moving their stalks for ever. The soil was the finest sand, but blue like a sulphur-flame. Everything lay

in a strange blue glimmer; one might fancy one stood high up in the air, with the sky above and beneath, rather than down on the bottom of the sea. When there was a dead calm, one could see the sun; it looked like a purple flower, with the daylight streaming from its chalice.

Each of the small Princesses had her own little plot, where she could dig and plant to her heart's desire. One gave her flower-bed the shape of a whale. It pleased another better to shape her's like a little Mermaid. But the youngest made her bed as round as the sun; and would have no flowers that did not shine as red as he.

She was a strange child, quiet and pensive; and while the other sisters decked their plots with the quaintest things they had picked out of wrecks, she would place nothing among those rose-red sun-like flowers of hers, except one fine marble statue. This was a beautiful boy, hewn out of pure white stone, that had come down with a sinking vessel. By his side she planted a rose-red weeping-willow: it grew splendidly, and hung its fresh branches right over him: and down upon the blue sands the shadows lay in violet, moving for ever like the branches themselves: it seemed as if tree-top and roots were always playing at *kiss-each-other*.

She knew no greater pleasure than hearing of the world of man: and the old Grandmother had to tell her of ships and towns, of men and animals. Especially strange and beautiful it seemed to her that the flowers on earth smelled sweet,—which they never did below the sea; and that the woods were green; and that the fishes between their branches could sing so loudly and so well, that it was a treat to hear them. It was the little birds that Grandmother called fishes, or the children could not have understood her, you see, as they had never seen a bird.

"When you have once turned your fifteenth year," said Grandmother, "you will be given leave to spring up from the deep, to sit in the moonlight on the rocks, and to see the large ships sailing by: ay, and woods you shall see besides, and cities too!"

The next year one of the sisters was fifteen; but the others—well, there was a year between each, and so the youngest had full five years more to wait, before she could dare to rise from the depths, and have a glimpse of the upper world. However, each promised to tell the other whatever she had seen or found most beautiful on her first day: for Grandmother did not tell them half enough; there was so much they wanted to know more about.

None of them longed so deeply as the youngest,—the very one who had the longest time to wait, and who always seemed so quiet and pensive. Many a night she stood at the open window looking up through the dark blue water, where the fishes were twinkling with their fins and tails. Moon and stars she could see: true, they shone very dim; but then they looked much larger through the water than they do to us. And if a black cloud, as it were, glided across them, she knew it was either a whale swimming over her, or a ship with a crew of men. Little did those sailors know that a beautiful little Mermaid stood underneath, and stretched up her white hands towards the keel.

CHILDREN PLAYING IN THE WATER
AND ALARMED BY ONE OF THE MERMAIDS
APPROACHING THE SHORE.



And now the eldest Princess was fifteen, and was allowed to rise up above the waves.

When she came back, she had a hundred things to tell: but the most beautiful of all, she said, was to lie in the moonlight on a sand-bank in the calm waters, and to see the large city near the coast, with the lights twinkling like hundreds of stars; to hear the music, and the rush and roar of men and carriages; to see the many church towers and spires, and hear their bells ringing. Just because she could never go in the middle of it all, she longed more after that than anything.

Oh, how greedily did the youngest sister listen! And, when, later in the evening, she stood by the open window, and looked through the dark-blue water, she thought of the great city, with all its rush and roar, and fancied she could hear the church-bells ringing down to her.

Next year the second sister had leave to rise through the sea, and swim where she pleased. She sprang up just as the sun was setting, and that night she thought the grandest. The whole sky was a sheet of gold, she said; and the clouds—nay, their beauty she could never describe!—red and violet they had gone sailing over her; but, swifter than they, a flock of swans had flown, like a long white belt, towards the sun; and she swam towards it too; but it sank, and the rosy tinge faded on the waters and the clouds.

Another year, and the third sister rose up. She was the boldest of all; and she swam up a broad river that flowed into the sea. Beautiful green hills and vineyards she saw; and castles and mansions peeping forth between glorious woods. She heard the birds carolling; she felt the sun so warm, that she often had to dive down to cool her burning face. In a little inlet she met a number of human children; they were running about naked, and splashing in the water. She wished to play with them, but they ran frightened away. Then there came a little black animal; it was a dog—but she had never seen a dog before—and it barked at her so dreadfully, that she quite lost heart, and made again for the open sea. But, never could she forget the splendid woods, the green hills, and the pretty children, who could swim in the water, though they had none of them got a fish's tail.

The fourth sister was not so brave. She had kept to the wide open sea; and it was most beautiful of all, she said, to be out there. One could see all round for many, many miles, and the sky arched over one like a vast crystal bell. She had seen ships sailing, but far away—they looked like sea-gulls. The funny dolphins had cut somersaults before her; and the great whales had forced the water out of their nostrils, till she seemed to be surrounded with waterspouts.

Now it was the turn of the fifth sister. Her birthday happened to be in the winter, and so she saw what none of the others had seen at the first going out. The sea was quite green, and large icebergs were floating everywhere; they looked like pearls, she said, and yet much larger than the church towers that are built by men. They put on

the strangest shapes, and glittered like diamonds. She seated herself on one of the largest blocks; and all the ships, in terror, kept aloof from where she sat, with her long hair sporting on the wind. But towards evening the sky was overcast; it thundered and lightened, while the dark sea heaved the huge iceblocks on high, and they shone in the glare of the lightning. On every ship they reefed the sails, and there was fear and anguish; but the Mermaid sat at ease on her floating iceberg, and watched the blue flashes shooting zig-zag into the shining sea.

The first time any of the sisters rose, she was always enraptured at what was new and beautiful; but presently, when she was allowed, as a full-grown maiden, to go where she pleased, it lost its charm. One after another they all longed for home again; and whenever they had been absent a month, they declared that the old haunts were the prettiest after all, and that nowhere else could one really feel oneself at home.

Many an evening did the five sisters link hands, and rise in a row from the depths of ocean. Beautiful were their voices—finer than those of mankind! And when such a storm was driving up, that it seemed nothing would live in it, they would swim before the ships, and sing to the seamen how beautiful it was on the sea-floor, and bid them not to be afraid of going down thither. But the men could not understand the words; and they fancied it was only the storm they heard. And they were never able to see the beauties of the depths; for when the ship sank, they were drowned, and came only as dead men to the Sea-King's palace.

When thus at eventide the sisters rose hand-in-hand above the waters, their little sister, left alone, would stand gazing after, and seeming just about to weep,—but a Mermaid has no tears to shed, and that makes her suffer all the more.

“Ah, if I were only fifteen!” she said. “I know I shall get very fond of the world up yonder and of the men who make their abode there.”

At length she was full fifteen.

“Well, now we have got *you* out of hand!” said her Grandmother, the old dowager queen: “come along and let me adorn you like your sisters.” And she placed on her head a wreath of white lilies, in which every petal was half a pearl. And she made eight large oysters pinch themselves on to the tail of the Princess, to mark her birth.

“That does hurt one so!” said the Little Mermaid.

“Well, one must bear a pinch, for the sake of appearances,” said the old lady.

Oh, how she would have liked to shake off this finery, and throw aside that heavy wreath: her red flowers were far more becoming to her; but she dared not make any change now. “Farewell!” she said; and she mounted up through the water, as light and brilliant as a bubble.

The sun had just gone down, as she lifted her head above the sea: but the clouds still shone like roses and gold; and through the flushed sky the evening star beamed bright and beautiful. The air was fresh, yet mild; and the sea lay like a mirror. A great three-masted ship was lying there. It had only one topsail that caught the

air: not a breath was stirring below; and the sailors were seated on the yards and in the rigging. There were songs and music; and as the evening grew darker hundreds of gay lanterns were lighted, looking as if the flags of all nations were fluttering in the air. The Little Mermaid swam right up to the cabin-window; and every time the waves heaved her up, she could look through the clear window-panes, and see the many well-dressed people standing within. But there was one handsomer than all, a young Prince, with large dark eyes; he could hardly be more than sixteen, and it was his birthday that was now being kept. The crew danced on the deck, and when the young Prince stepped up among them, more than a hundred rockets leapt into the air. They made such a bright daylight that the Little Mermaid was quite abashed, and ducked under the water. But she soon put up her head again; and then it seemed as if all the stars of heaven were showering down on her. Never had she seen such a thing as these fireworks. Large suns went whirling round; fishes of fire hovered in the air; and everything was reflected in the clear calm water. On the ship it was so light that the smallest rope was visible, not to mention the men. Oh, was he not handsome, that young Prince, as he shook hands with the seamen, and laughed and smiled, while the music streamed forth in the beautiful night!

It grew late; but the Little Mermaid could not turn her eyes from the ship, and from the handsome prince. The many coloured lights were quenched; the rockets ceased to rise; the cannons boomed no more; but deep down in the water there was a heavy stir, and a hollow murmur. Still she sat, rising and falling with the waves, so that she could look into the cabin. Presently the ship began to make more way; one sail opened after another; the waves ran higher; dark clouds gathered; it lightened in the distance. There was a terrible storm drawing near, and the crew took in the sails. The great ship staggered, as it flew over the rough sea; the water rose into great black mountains, that threatened to roll over the masts; but the ship dipped, like a swan, between the high seas, and then mounted up again on the towering surges. This was just a pleasant ride for the Little Mermaid, but not so for the sailors. The ship creaked and cracked; the sea beat against it, till the stout planks bent to the heavy shocks; the mast broke in twain, as if it were a reed; and the ship lay on her beam ends, with the water pouring in. The Little Mermaid saw now that they were in danger. She had much ado herself, to keep clear of the spars and splinters that drove before the storm. At one moment all was pitch darkness, and she could not catch a glimpse of anything; but then would come a flash of lightning, and she could make out every man on deck, all staggering or standing, as best they could. Her eyes sought for the young Prince; and she saw him, as the ship went to pieces, swept away into the deep sea. She was quite charmed, at first; for now he would go down to her people. But straight she recollected that his race could not live in the water; and that only as a dead man would he enter her father's palace.

Dead! no, he must not die! Forward she swam, in the midst of the driving

timbers, forgetting that they might have crushed her! now plunging through the billows, and now surmounting them, till at last she reached the young Prince. He could not have held up much longer in the raging sea. His limbs began to fail him; his brilliant eyes were closing: he must have sunk if the Little Mermaid had not come to the rescue. She kept his head above water, and let herself and him be borne along wherever the billows pleased.

At the dawn of morning the tempest was over. Not a splinter of the ship was to be seen. Red and fiery rose the sun out of the sea, and seemed to bring life into the Prince's cheeks; but still his eyes were closed. The Mermaid kissed his fine high forehead, and stroked back his wet hair; she fancied he looked like the marble statue down in her little garden: she kissed him again, and hoped that he might live.

Now she saw land before her. She saw high blue mountains, with white snow on their summits, as if swans were lying there. Along the shore stretched beautiful green woods, and in front of them stood a church or a convent, she could not tell which, but a building it was of some sort. Orange and lemon-trees grew in the garden; and before the gates stood lofty palm-trees. Here the sea formed a small bay: it was quite smooth, but very deep, right under the cliffs, where there was a rim of fine white sand. Hither she came with the handsome Prince, and she laid him on the sands, and took good care that his head lay high, and in the warm sunshine.

Now the bells began ringing in the great white building, and many young girls came through the garden. Then the Little Mermaid swam out again, and hid behind some high stones that stood up out of the sea, and sprinkled sea-foam on her breast and hair, that no one might mark her; and thus she watched to see who would come to the poor Prince.

It was not long before a young girl passed that way. She was startled, and shrank back, but only for a moment; then she fetched more people, and the Mermaid saw how the Prince came to life, and had a smile for all around—except for her:—for *her*, indeed! why, he knew nothing of her having saved him. She felt very sad, and when he was borne away into the large house, she dived moodily down into the water, and turned homewards to her father's palace.

She had always been silent and pensive, but now she grew even more so. Her sisters asked her what she had seen at her first going up, but she told them nothing. Many a morning and evening she rose at the spot where she had left the Prince. She saw how the fruits in the garden ripened, and were plucked; she saw how the snow melted on the high mountains; but never again did she see the Prince. And she returned, every time, sadder and sadder, home. It was her only comfort there to sit in her little garden, with her arms round the handsome marble statue, which she fancied like the Prince. But her flowers she tended no longer; they straggled over the walks, as in a wilderness; and they matted their long stalks and leaves among the branches of the trees, till all was dusky gloom.

At last she could not keep it all to herself, but told it to one of her sisters; and so before long the others knew it too; but only they, and two or three other mermaids, who never spoke of it at all, except to their most intimate friends. One of these knew who the Prince was, and had seen the fine show on board the ship: she knew the course that he had sailed, and where his kingdom lay.

"Come, little sister!" said the other princesses; and linked together, with their arms round each other's shoulders, they rose in front of the shore where, they knew, stood the palace of the Prince.

It was built of a pale yellow glittering stone, with broad marble steps, one flight of them coming down to the water. Fine gilded domes rose above the roof; and between the columns, which ran round the building, stood marble figures, that seemed to be living. Through the clear glass of the high windows one could look into splendid halls, decked with silken curtains and rich carpets, and hung with paintings that it was a pleasure to gaze at. In the centre of the largest hall there splashed a full fountain; the jets played high up towards the glass dome that overarched it, while the sun shone through the glass upon the water, and upon the graceful plants that grew in the broad basin.

Now she knew where he lived; and many an evening and night did she rise to those waters. She swam much nearer the shore than any of the others had ventured: ay, she went right up into the narrow canal, under the splendid marble balcony that cast a long shadow over the water. Here would she float, and gaze up at the young Prince, when he fancied he was quite alone in the clear moonlight.

She saw him, many an evening, sail with music in his gaily-painted galley; where the flags were waving. Then she would peep forth from between the green rushes; and if any one chanced to see the wind catch her long silvery veil, he fancied it was a swan that spread his wings.

She listened, many a night, when the fishermen lay out at sea with lighted torches; and heard how much good they had to tell of the young Prince; and it gladdened her that she had saved his life, when he was driving half-dead upon the waves; and she thought how close his head had rested on her breast, how tenderly she had kissed him,—and yet he knew nothing about it, and could never even dream of her.

More and more did she cleave unto the race of men. More and more did she long to rise and be one of them herself. Their world seemed to her far greater than her own; they could fly across the ocean in their ships, and climb the hill-tops high above the clouds; and the lands which they owned stretched away, with forest and field, farther than her sight could reach. There was so much she wanted to know; but her sisters could not answer everything; so she asked the old Grandmother, who knew a good deal of the upper world,—or, as she used to call it, the *above-sea-lands*.

"When men are not drowned," asked the Little Mermaid, "do they then live for ever? do they not die as we do, down here in the sea?"

"Ay, ay!" said the old lady, "they too must die; and indeed their life-time is much shorter even than ours. We may live three hundred years: but then when our life is over we turn into sea-foam, and have not so much as a grave down here amongst our dear ones. We have no immortal souls,—we never renew our life,—we are like the green reeds, that once cut in two, can never be green again. Man, on the other hand, has a soul that lives for ever,—lives when the body is dust and ashes; it rises then through the clear air, up to all the shining stars. Just as we rise up from the deep and see the lands of men, even so they rise up to beautiful unknown places, which we can never hope to see."

"Why were immortal souls not given to us?" asked the Little Mermaid sadly. "I would give all my hundreds of years for one day of human life, and a share of the heavenly world beyond."

"Never think of such a thing!" said the old lady, "we are much happier and better off here, than men are up yonder."

"And so I must die and float as foam on the sea; not hear the music of the waves, nor yet see the beautiful flowers and the ruddy sun! Can I do nothing then, to gain an immortal soul?"

"No!" replied the Grandmother, "not unless a man should hold you so dear, that you were more to him than father and mother; not unless with every thought and desire he clung to you, and let the priest lay his right hand in yours, plighting you his faith here and throughout eternity. Then indeed his soul would flow over into your bosom, and you would obtain a share in human bliss; then he would endow you with soul, and yet keep his own. But this can never come to pass! Why your chief beauty here in the sea, that fish's tail, is considered hideous on earth. They don't know any better, you see; but there one must needs have two clumsy props, legs they call them, if one wants to be thought handsome!"

Then the Little Mermaid sighed and looked down at her fish's tail. "Let us be merry!" said the old lady, "let us sport and gambol away the three hundred years we have to live. Surely that is long enough, and ought to make one die contented. So now, we will have a court-ball to-night!"

And a splendour there was indeed, such as one never sees on earth. In the great ball-room the walls and ceiling were of crystal, thick but clear. Many hundreds of colossal mussel-shells, some rosy red, and some grass green, stood in rows on either side, sending forth jets of bright blue flame that filled the hall with light, and shone through the walls, till the sea outside was lighted too. One could see the countless fishes, great and small, swimming around the glassy wall, some of them glittering with purple scales, and others looking like silver and gold. Through the centre of the hall flowed a broad rippling stream, and here danced the mermen and mermaids to their own beautiful songs. Such glorious voices are never known on earth. The Little Mermaid sang sweetest of them all, and they clapped hands at her; and for one moment her heart beat with joy,

for she knew she had the finest voice of all, on the earth or in the sea. But she soon fell again into thoughts of the world above her. She could neither forget the handsome Prince, nor her grief that she was not gifted, like him, with an immortal soul. She stole out of her father's palace, and while all within was song and merriment, she sat sorrowful in her little garden. Then she heard the notes of a bugle-horn piercing down through the water, and she thought, "Now he is gliding up yonder in his boat, he whom I love more than father or mother; he whom my thought cleaves to, and in whose hand I would lay my life's happiness. I will risk all to gain him, and to gain an immortal soul. While my sisters are dancing in my father's palace, I will go to the Sea-witch; her of whom I have always stood in fear; perchance she may counsel and aid me!"

So the Little Mermaid went out of her garden, on her way to the roaring maelstroms that guarded the dwelling of the Witch. Never had she gone that way before. Here there grew neither flowers nor weeds, nothing but bare grey sand-banks stretched along the road; beyond were the maelstroms, whirling things round like mill-wheels, and dragging whatever they seized down into the abyss. Between these grinding whirlpools she had to pass before she gained the Sea-witch's domain. Still further on she had a long way to go, without any road, over a hot bubbling bog; this the Witch called her turf pit. Behind it lay the Witch's house, in the midst of a strange sort of wood. All the trees and bushes were polypi, half plant, half animal. They looked like hundred-headed serpents growing up out of the ground. Their branches were long slimy arms, with fingers that were wriggling worms; and from the root to the uttermost tip every joint kept always moving. Whatever in the sea came within their reach they seized, twining close around it, and never letting it go again. The Little Mermaid stopped frightened, and stood outside, her heart beating fast with terror. She was almost turning back again; but then she thought of the Prince, and of gaining a human soul, and she mustered up courage. She tied her long waving hair close round her head, that the polypi might not seize her by it; crossed her hands on her breast, and flew forward as a fish flies through the water, between the hideous polypi that stretched out their curling arms and fingers to clutch her. She saw that whatever any one of them had laid hold of, it gripped as firmly with a hundred little arms, as if with iron bands. Men who had perished on the sea, and sunk into the depths, now gleamed forth, as white skeletons, from the arms of the polypi. They kept rudders and sea-chests in a tight embrace; and skeletons of land animals; and that of a little Mermaid, whom they had caught and strangled; this of all the horrors, was perhaps the most horrible.

Now she came to a broad quagmire in the forest, where fat water-snakes were wallowing, and showing their yellow-white bellies. In the midst of the mire stood a house, built of the bones of shipwrecked men. Here sat the Sea-witch, letting a toad eat out of her mouth, as we may let a canary-bird eat sugar. The nasty fat water-snakes she called her *little chicks*, and let them roll about on her big leathery breast.

"I know well what you want," said the Sea-witch; "'tis a stupid thought of yours;

but, for all that, you shall have your wish, for 'twill bring you to misfortune, my sweet princess; you are longing to shake off your fish's tail, and to get two stilts instead, like those of men, to walk upon; that so your young Prince may dote upon you and you may gain him, and an immortal soul." And the witch laughed aloud so viciously that the toad and the snakes fell down on the ground and lay wallowing there.

"You come just at the nick of time," said the Witch; "to-morrow, at sunrise, I could not have helped you before another year had come round again. I will prepare a drink for you, and you must swim ashore with it, before the sun rises, and sit down and drink it. Then your tail will split in two, and gather up into what men call shapely legs, and you will feel as if a sharp sword cut through you. All who see you will say you are the loveliest child of man they have ever beheld. You will still keep your swimming gait; no dancing girl will move so lightly; but with every step you will feel as if you were treading on a sharp knife, and the blood were spirting out of you. Will you bear all this? if so, I will help you."

"Yes!" said the Little Mermaid, with a trembling voice, and she thought of the Prince, and of gaining an immortal soul.

"But mind!" said the Witch, "when once you have got a human shape, you can never become a mermaid again. You can never go down through the water to your sisters, and to your father's palace. And, mind! unless you win the Prince's love, and make him forget father and mother for you, and cleave unto you with his whole heart, and bid the priest join your hands and make you man and wife, you can never gain an immortal soul. And the morning after the day that he weds another, your heart will break, and you will turn into foam on the sea."

"I venture it," said the Little Mermaid, as pale as death.

"But, besides, you must pay *me*," said the Witch; "and it's no trifle that I shall ask for. You have the finest voice of all in the under-ocean world, and with this you think to charm the Prince. But this very voice you must give up to me! The best you have I demand for my costly drink. And why not? my own blood must I shed into it, and so make it sharp as a two-edged sword."

"But when you take away my voice," said the Little Mermaid; "what have I got left?"

"Your beautiful shape," said the Witch, "your swimming gait, and your speaking eyes; with these you may still beguile a human heart. Come, have you lost courage? Out with your little tongue, and I will cut it off as payment, and then you shall have the powerful drink."

"Be it so!" said the Little Mermaid; and the Witch put her cauldron on, to cook the witch-draught. "Cleanliness is next to godliness," said she, scouring the cauldron with the snakes, which she twisted into a wisp. And now she scratched herself in her breast, and let her black blood trickle into the cauldron. The steam arose in such wild shapes, that one could not help feeling fear and horror. Every moment the Witch

threw new things into the broth, and as it bubbled up it sounded like the wail of a crocodile. At last the draught was brewed—it looked clear as the purest water.

“There it is for you,” said the Witch; and she cut out the tongue of the Little Mermaid. She was dumb now; she could neither sing nor speak.

“If the polypi seize you, as you go back through my wood,” said the Witch, “only sprinkle a single drop of this drink over them, and their arms and fingers will break into a thousand pieces!” But the Little Mermaid was not compelled to spill a drop, for the polypi drew back in fear, when they saw the bright draught that shone in her hand like a sparkling star. So she soon came through the forest, the moor, and the roaring maelstroms.

She could see her father’s palace: the lights were out in the great ball-room. Doubtless, they were all asleep within. But she could not bear to approach them, now that she was dumb, and was going to leave them for ever. Her heart was like to break with sorrow; she stole into the garden, plucked one flower out of each of the sisters’ flower-beds; threw a thousand kisses from her fingers towards the palace, and went up through the dark blue sea.

The sun had not yet risen when she came near the palace of the Prince, and landed on the splendid marble stairs. The moon shone beautifully clear. The Little Mermaid drank the fiery draught, and a two-edged sword seemed to pass through her tender body; she swooned away and lay as dead. When the sun rose over the sea she awoke, and felt a burning pain, but right before her stood the young Prince. He gazed at her with his dark eyes, so that she cast down her own; and then she saw that the fish’s tail was gone, and that she had the prettiest white legs that any little girl could have; but she was quite naked, so she wrapped herself in her long thick hair. The Prince asked who she was, and how she had come hither; but she gazed at him with her dark blue eyes, softly yet very sadly, and could not speak a word. Then he took her by the hand, and led her up into the palace. At every step she felt, as the witch had warned her, as if she were treading on sharp blades and pointed awls; but this she suffered gladly. By the side of the Prince she mounted up, as light as a bubble; and all wondered at her graceful swimming gait.

Costly robes of silk and muslin were brought her: she stood there in the palace, fairest of all;—but she was dumb, she could neither sing nor speak. Beautiful slaves, clad in silk and gold, stepped forth and sang to the Prince and his royal parents: there was one that sang sweeter than the rest, and the Prince clapped his hands and smiled at her; then the Little Mermaid felt sad, for she knew that she herself had once sung sweeter still. And “Oh!” she thought, “if he did but know that, only to be near him, I gave away my voice for ever.” And now the slaves danced airy dances to the sounds of delicious music. Then the Little Mermaid lifted up her beautiful white arms, and rose on tiptoe, and floated over the floor, dancing as no one yet had ever danced. Every movement showed off her beauty more and more, and her eyes spoke nearer to the heart than all the songs of the slave-girls.

All were enraptured, but none so much as the Prince, who called her his *little Foundling*. And still she went on dancing, though every time she footed the ground it was like treading on sharp blades. The Prince said she should always live near him; and she was allowed to sleep on a velvet cushion outside his door.

He had a page's suit made for her, that she might follow him on horseback. They rode through fragrant woods, where the green branches brushed her shoulders, and little birds sang behind the fresh leaves. She clambered with the Prince up the high mountains; and though her white feet bled, so that the others saw it, she laughed and followed him, till they saw the clouds sail underneath them, like birds on their flight to foreign lands.

When at home, in the Prince's palace, she would go forth at night, while the others were asleep, on to the broad marble stairs, and it freshened her burning feet to stand in the cold sea-water; and then she would think of those down below there in the deep.

One night she saw her sisters arm-in-arm; they were singing mournfully as they swam over the water. She beckoned them, and they knew her; and told her how much grief she had caused them all. From that time they visited her every night; and one night she saw, far out at sea, the old Grandmother, who had not for many years been above water; and she saw the Sea-King, with his crown upon his head; and they stretched their hands towards her, but did not venture so near land as her sisters did.

Day by day she grew dearer to the Prince. He loved her as one may love a dear good child. But to make her his queen—such a thought never crossed his mind! And yet his wife she must be, or she would never gain an immortal soul; but on the morning after his marriage with another she would turn into foam on the sea.

"Dost thou love me best of all?" the eyes of the Little Mermaid seemed to ask, when he took her in his arms, and kissed her fair brow.

"Yes; you are my dearest one!" said the Prince; "for you have the kindest heart—you are the one most devoted to me—and you look like a young maid whom once I saw, but can hardly hope to meet again. I was on a ship that foundered; the waves washed me on shore near a sacred temple, where some young girls were doing service, and the youngest found me on the shore and saved my life. I saw her but twice. She is the only one I could love. But you are like her; you almost take the place of her image in my soul. She belongs to the sacred temple; therefore, good fortune has sent me you, and never will we part!"

"Alas, he does not know it was I who saved his life!" thought the little Mermaid. "That I bore him over the sea to the wood where stands the temple; that I watched from behind the foam to mark if any would come to help. I saw her come, the pretty girl, whom he loves better than me!" And the Mermaid sighed deeply,—she could not weep. "Yet still," she thought, "that girl belongs to the holy temple, and cannot enter the world; they will never meet again. I am with him,—see him every day; I will nurse him, love him, give my whole life to him!"

"But now the Prince," they say, "is to be married; he is to have the beautiful daughter of the neighbour king; and that is why he is fitting out the ship so splendidly. The Prince is travelling, we are told, to see the lands of the neighbour king. But he really goes to see the king's daughter. There is a great retinue going with him." Yet the Little Mermaid shook her head and laughed; she knew the Prince's mind much better than all the others. "I must travel," he had said to her; "I must see the beautiful Princess; my parents require that. But they will not compel me to bring her home as my bride. I cannot love her! she is not like the sweet girl in the temple, whom you are like. Were I bound to choose a bride, it would rather be you, my silent foundling with the speaking eyes!" And he kissed her red lips, played with her long hair, and laid his head on her bosom, till her heart dreamed of human joy, and of an immortal soul!

"You are not afraid of the sea, are you, my dumb child?" he asked, when they stood on the splendid ship which was to bear him to the lands of the neighbour king. And then he told her of storms, and of dead calms; of strange fishes in the depths, and of what the divers had seen there. And she smiled at his stories; she knew so much better than any one about the ocean floor!

In the moonlight night, when all were asleep, save the steersman who stood at the helm, she sat by the gunwale, and gazed down through the clear water. And then she seemed to see her father's palace; and there, in front of it, stood her grandmother, with the silver crown on her head, staring up through the rough stream towards the keel of the vessel. Then came her sisters up above water; they gazed at her sorrowfully, wringing their white hands. She beckoned and smiled; and wished to tell them by signs that all went well with her. But a cabin-boy came near, and the sisters sank below; and she began to fancy that the white she had seen was foam on the waves.

The next morning the ship ran into the harbour of the neighbour king's splendid city. All the church bells rang; and from the high towers there was blowing of trumpets, while the soldiers drew up with waving banners and glittering bayonets. Every day had its own festival. Balls and banquets followed one another. But the Princess was not yet there. She had been brought up far away, in a sacred temple, and there (they said) she had learnt all queenly virtues. At length she came.

The Little Mermaid stood anxiously waiting to see her beauty; and she could not but confess that a more lovely being she had never beheld. Her skin was so fine and pure; and from behind those long dark lashes there smiled such a loving pair of dark blue eyes.

"Is it thou?" cried the Prince. "Thou art she who saved me when I lay like a corpse on the shore!" And he pressed his blushing bride to his heart. "Oh, I am all too happy!" he said to the Little Mermaid. "The best—what I never dared hope for—has been granted me! You will rejoice in my happiness, for you love me more than all of them!" And the Little Mermaid kissed his hand, and she seemed to feel her heart burst asunder. The morning after his marriage would most surely bring her death, and turn her into foam on the sea.

All the church bells rang, and heralds rode through the streets to proclaim the betrothal. Fragrant oil burned on the altars in costly silver lamps. The priests swung the censers, and bride and bridegroom joined hands, and received the bishop's blessing. The Little Mermaid stood in silk and gold, and held the train of the bride. But her ears did not hear the festive music—her eyes did not see the holy ceremony—she thought of the coming death-night, and of all in this world that she had lost.

When evening came the bride and bridegroom went on board the ship; the cannons boomed, the flags waved, and in the centre of the deck was raised a royal pavilion of gold and purple, fitted up with the richest cushions, where the bridal pair might sleep in the cool calm night.

The sails swelled in the wind; and the ship glided over the clear sea with light and even motion.

When it grew dark, many-coloured lamps were lighted, and the sailors danced merrily on the deck. The Little Mermaid thought of that eve when first she rose from the sea, and saw the same brilliance and gaiety. She joined in the dance, wheeling and doubling, as the swallow may double when pursued, and all around her shouted their applause. Never had she danced so splendidly. There was the cutting of sharp knives in her feet, but she felt it not, for the cutting was far more cruel in her heart. She knew this would be the last evening she could see him,—him for whom she had left her home and kindred, had given away her glorious voice, and for whom she daily suffered unspeakable pains! And yet he knew nothing of it all! It was the last night she would breathe the same air as he—would behold the deep sea, and the starry blue of the sky. An eternal night, without thought and without dream, awaited her, for she had no soul—she could never gain a soul! And all was joy and merriment on the ship till long after midnight. She laughed and danced, with the death-thought in her heart. The Prince kissed his beautiful bride, and she played with his black hair; and arm-in-arm they went to rest in the rich pavilion.

Now all was hushed and still on board the ship; only the steersman stood by the rudder. The Little Mermaid laid her white arms on the gunwale, and turned her eyes eastward, looking for the morning-red. The first sunbeam, she knew, would kill her. Then she saw her sisters rise out of the deep; they were pale, like her; their long hair fluttered in the wind no more,—it was shorn away.

"We have given it to the witch, and begged her to help, that you should not die this night. She has given us a knife,—it is here!—see you not how sharp! Before the sun rises, you must plunge it into the Prince's heart; and then, when his warm blood sprinkles your feet, they will grow together into a fish's tail, and once again you will be a mermaid, and again go down to us, and live out your three hundred years, ere you turn into salt sea-foam. Hasten! ere the sun rises, either he or you must die! Our old grandmother grieves till her white hair has fallen off, even as our hair fell to the sea-witch's shears. Kill the Prince, and come home to us! Hasten! See you that red

streak in the distance? Yet a few minutes, and the sun will rise, and you must die!" And they uttered a strange, deep sighing, and sank in the billows.

The Little Mermaid drew aside the curtain from the pavilion, and she saw the beautiful bride sleeping, with her head on the Prince's breast. She bent down—kissed his handsome brow—looked up at the sky, where the morning-red shone brighter—looked again at the sharp knife, and again fixed her eyes upon the Prince. He murmured his bride's name; she alone was in his thought; and the knife quivered in the Mermaid's hand. But then she cast it away, far out in the reddening sea; and drops of blood, where it fell, seemed to spirt up from the billows. She turned her half-quenched eyes, for one last look upon the Prince, and leaped into the waves, and she felt how her body was melting into foam.

The sun rose out of the sea. The beams fell soft and warm on the death-cold sea-foam, and the Little Mermaid felt no longer now like dying. She still saw the bright sun; and up above her swayed hundreds of transparent beautiful creatures. Through their bodies she could see the white sails of the ship, and the red clouds of the sky. Their voice was melody, but so spiritual, that no earthly ear could hear it, even as no earthly eye could see them. They floated* without wings, buoyed by their own lightness, through the air. The Little Mermaid saw that she also had a body like theirs, and it kept rising more and more out of the foam.

"To whom am I going?" she asked; and her voice sounded like the other voices—so spiritual, that no earthly music could convey it.

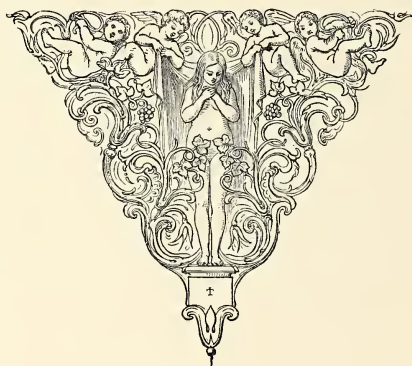
"To the daughters of air," the others answered. "The Mermaid has no immortal soul, and can never gain one, except through the love of a child of man: on an alien power depends her eternal life! Neither have the daughters of air an immortal soul; but by good deeds they may make one for themselves. We are flying to warm lands, where the sultry air of the plague is killing men. Thither we are bringing coolness. We shall waft the fragrance of herbs and blossoms, and spread refreshment and healing through the air. When thus, for three hundred years, we have striven to do what good we can, we receive an immortal soul, and partake in the eternal bliss of man. Thou, Little Mermaid, hast striven with all thy heart after the same as we. By suffering and by patience thou hast raised thyself to the world of air; and now, by the good deeds of three hundred years, thou mayest win thyself an immortal soul."

And the Little Mermaid lifted her clear arms towards God's sun, and for the first time she felt tears. On the ship there was life and bustle again. She saw the Prince with his beautiful bride seeking her: sadly they gazed down at the bubbling foam, as though they knew she had plunged into the waves. Unseen she kissed the bride's brow, and she smiled to *him*, and rose with the other children of air on the rose-red cloud that sailed in the sky.

"For three hundred years, then, we keep soaring thus into the kingdom of God!"

"Yea, and earlier may we reach it!" whispered one. "We float unseen into the

dwellings where children are; and for every day that we find a child who gives pleasure to his elders, and deserves their love, God shortens our time of trial. The child knows not that we are flying through the room; and when we smile at it with joy, a year is taken away from the full three hundred. But if we see the child wicked, we must then weep tears of sorrow; and every tear adds a day to our time of trial."





THUMBKINETTA.



NCE on a time there was a Good-wife who longed to have just a wee bit of a baby; but she could not think where in the world she was to get one; so she went to an old Witch, and said to her:—"I do so dearly long to have a little baby; will you not tell me where I can get one?"

"Ay, ay; we shall be able to manage that," said the Witch: "Here is a barleycorn for you, not by any means one of those that grow in the farmer's field, or that the fowls feed upon; take this, and lay it in a flower-pot, and then you will see something."

"Thank ye kindly," said the Good-wife, and gave the Witch a threepenny piece. Then she went home and planted the barleycorn, and all at once there sprang up a beautiful large flower. It looked exactly like a tulip; but the leaves were folded close together, as if it were still in the bud.

"That is a comely flower," said the Good-wife, and kissed it on its handsome red and yellow leaves; but while she was kissing it, the flower gave a loud snap, and opened. It was a real tulip, one could see that; but in the middle of the flower, on the green pistil, there was seated a tiny little maid, so tender and so charming; she was not a bit more than a thumb long, and so she got the name of Thumbkinetta.

A splendidly polished walnut-shell was given her for a cradle, blue violet leaves for mattresses, and a rose leaf for her coverlet; here she slept at night, but she played about all day on the table. The Good-wife used to set a plate for her, and deck it all round with a wreath of flowers that dipped their stalks in the water. In the middle there floated a large tulip leaf, and upon this Thumbkinetta could row herself from one side of the plate to another, with two white horse-hairs for oars. It did look so beautiful. She could sing too—oh! so softly and prettily—one had never heard anything like it.

One night, as she lay in her pretty bed, a hideous Toad came hobbling in through the window, where there was a pane broken. The Toad was ever so ugly, and big, and wet; and down it flounced on the table where Thumbkinetta lay sleeping under the red rose leaf. "That's just the sort of wife for my son," said the Toad; and thereupon,

taking hold of the walnut-shell with the sleeping Thumbkinetta, it scrambled off with them through the pane, and down into the garden.

Beyond the garden flowed a stream, broad and full; but close under the banks there was mire and swamp, and here dwelt Dame Toad with her son; and an ugly fellow, too, was he, the very image of his mother, and "Crax, crax, brekki-kik-kix," was all he could say, when he spied the pretty little maiden in the walnut-shell.

"Don't chatter so loud, or you will awake her," grumbled the old dame; "she might run away still, for she is as light as a bit of swan's-down. We will set her out in the stream, on one of the broad water-lily leaves; to a light little thing like her it will be quite an island; and, once there, she cannot get away till we have got the mud-parlour ready, where you and she are to live together."

Out in the stream there grew many water-lilies, with those broad green leaves that look as if they were floating. The leaf that was furthest off was also the largest; so old Dame Toad swam out there, and placed on it the walnut-shell with Thumbkinetta.

The poor little creature awoke at daybreak; and when she saw where she was, she began to cry bitterly, for there was water on every side of the great green leaf, and she had no means at all of getting to land.

The old Toad was sitting down in the mud, and decking her room with bulrushes and marsh marigolds, for it had to be smartened up for the new daughter-in-law. But now she swam out, with her ugly son, to the leaf where Thumbkinetta stood; they wanted to fetch her pretty bed, that was to be set up in the bridal-room, before she came there herself. Old Dame Toad curtsied low down in the water, and said:—"Here you see my son; he is to be your husband; and you and he will live a beautiful life down in the mud."

"Crax, crax! brekki-kik-kix!" was all that the son had to say.

Then they took the pretty little bed, and swam away with it. But Thumbkinetta sat weeping alone on the green leaf: for she would not live with the nasty Toad, nor have her ugly son for a husband. But the little fishes, that swim down under the water, had seen Dame Toad, and heard what she said; so they poked up their heads, to get a peep at the little maid. But no sooner did they catch sight of her, than they thought her so pretty, and were so sorry she should live with the nasty Toad—no, that should never be! They flocked together in the water, round the green stem of the leaf she stood upon: and they gnawed the stem asunder; and the leaf floated away with Thumbkinetta, far away, down the river, where the Toad could not follow.

Thumbkinetta sailed past ever so many places; and the small birds sat in the bushes, and looked at her, and sang, "What a dainty little maiden!" The leaf floated away with her further and further: and thus Thumbkinetta went abroad.

A pretty little white butterfly kept fluttering around her, and settled at last on the leaf, for it took a great fancy to Thumbkinetta. And she, how happy she felt! There was no fear that the Toad could overtake her now: and all was beautiful wherever she

TOMMELISE VERY DESOLATE ON THE
WATER-LILY LEAF.

sailed. The sun shone on the waters, and they looked like shining gold. Then she took off her sash, fastened one end round the butterfly and the other to the leaf, and thus it glided on more rapidly, and she too, for she still stood on the leaf.

Presently a big cockchafer came booming along: he caught sight of her, clawed hold of her slender waist, and flew off with her, up into a tall tree; but the green leaf went floating down the stream, and along with it fluttered the butterfly, for he was bound to the leaf, and could not get loose.

Heavens, what a fright it was for poor Thumbkinetta, when the cockchafer flew with her up into the tree! Yet she was still more troubled about the dear white butterfly that she had left bound to the leaf: if he should never get loose! why, he would be starved to death! But that was no matter to the cockchafer. He seated himself with her on the largest green leaf of the tree, gave her honeyjuice of flowers to feed upon, and told her she was a beauty, though it was true she bore no likeness at all to a cockchafer.

By and bye all the other cockchafers who lived in the tree came to pay their visits. They looked at Thumbkinetta, and the Miss Chafers turned up their feelers. "Why, she has only got two legs," said one; "how poor that looks!"—"She has not got a single feeler," said another. And, "Oh, what a stick of a waist!" said a third. "She looks just like a human creature."—"How very plain she is!" chimed in the rest of the Miss Chafers. Yet, for all that, Thumbkinetta was very pretty; and the cockchafer who had stolen her thought so himself; but, as all the others said she was hideous, he believed them at last, and would have nothing more to do with her,—she might go wherever she pleased. So they flew down the tree, and placed her on a daisy; and there she sat weeping, because she was so ugly that the cockchafers would have nothing to do with her: and yet she was the loveliest little being that could be imagined,—as fine and fair as the most beautiful rose-leaf.

Through the whole summer long poor Thumbkinetta lived quite alone in the great forest. She plaited herself a bed of grass-blades, and hung it under a large dockleaf, where the rain could not reach her. She gathered sweets from the flowers, to feed upon; and drank the dew that stood on the leaves every morning. Thus the summer and autumn passed away; but now the winter came—the cold dreary winter. All the birds that had sung to her flew away: the flowers and the foliage withered: the large dockleaf, that had given her shelter, shrivelled up, and became a bare yellow stalk. She shrank at the nipping air, for her clothes were in tatters, and she was herself so very slight and tender. Poor Thumbkinetta! surely she must be frozen to death. And now it began snowing; and every snowflake that fell on her was like a whole shovelful thrown upon us: for we are big, and she was only a thumb long. So now she wrapped herself up in a withered leaf; but it would not warm her, and she shivered with cold.

She made her way somehow, out of the forest, and at the outskirts she found a large cornfield. The corn had long ago been cut and carried, and only dry naked stubbles bristled from the frozen ground. To her they were quite a wood to get through: and

oh, how she did shiver with cold! And now she came to the Field-mouse's door. It was a little hole that led right under the corn-stubbles; and there the Field-mouse was snugly housed and well-fed, with a full granary, and a capital kitchen and larder. Poor little Thumbkinetta stood up in the doorway like any other beggar-girl, and begged for a little bit of barley grain, for she had gone two whole days without a morsel to eat.

"Poor child!" said the Field-mouse, who was indeed a kind old Field-mouse; "come into my warm room, and have a meal with me."

And soon taking a fancy to Thumbkinetta, she added:—"You may stay with me all the winter, if you like, child; only you must keep my room neat and clean, and tell me stories,—for I am dearly fond of stories." And Thumbkinetta did as the good old dame requested, and got on with her famously well.

"We shall be having a visit before long," said the Field-mouse one day: "my next-door neighbour, as a rule, comes to see me once a week. He is better off even than I am,—has fine large rooms, and wears such a beautiful black velvet pelisse. If you could only get him for a husband, your fortune would be made. But he cannot see you; so you must tell him all your prettiest stories."

But Thumbkinetta had no great fancy for the match; indeed, she would not have the neighbour on any account, for he was a Mole. He came and paid the visit in his black velvet pelisse. And the Field-mouse kept repeating afterwards how rich he was, and how learned! His house had twenty times as much accommodation as her own, and there was no doubt at all about his learning. True, the sun and the pretty flowers he could not endure, but abused them roundly, for he had never seen them. Thumbkinetta had to sing for him, and she sang "Lady-bird, Lady-bird, fly away home!" and "The monk goes in the meadow the summer day so long." Then Mr. Mole fell in love with her, for her sweet voice; but he did not say anything—he was such a cautious old fellow!

He had lately dug a long underground passage from his house to theirs; and the Field-mouse and Thumbkinetta had leave to take a walk in it whenever they pleased. He warned them, however, not to get frightened at the dead bird that lay in the passage; it was a whole bird, with bill and feathers, that must have died but a short time before, at the beginning of winter, and had been buried just where Mr. Mole had made his passage.

He took a piece of touchwood in his mouth—for that shines like fire in the dark—and went in front, to light up the long dark passage for them. But when they came where the dead bird was lying, he thrust his broad nose right against the ceiling, and threw up the earth, so as to drill a great hole, and let in the daylight. And there, in the midst of the floor, lay a dead Swallow, with the pretty wings pressed closely to its sides, and its head and legs drawn up within the ruffled feathers. The poor bird had died, no doubt, of cold.

This made Thumbkinetta feel sick at heart. She was very fond indeed of little

birds, for all the summer they had sung and twittered to her delightfully. But Mr. Mole kicked at it with his short legs, and said, "Now there is an end to its chirruping! It must be miserable indeed to be born a little bird. God forbid that such should be the case with any of my children! Why, a bird like that has nothing but its chirrup to call its own, and must starve to death when the winter comes."

"Spoken like a sensible man, as you are!" returned the Field-mouse. "What, when the winter comes, has the bird got for his chirrup? Nothing but freezing and starvation! But all that, I suppose, is part and parcel of his grand notions."

Thumbkinetta was silent; but, as soon as the two others had turned their backs to the bird, she stooped down, stroked back the feathers that covered its head, and kissed it on the closed eyes. "Perhaps it was you who sang so sweetly to me in the summer," she thought; "and gave me so much pleasure, you dear, pretty bird."

Mr. Mole now stopped up the hole through which the daylight had come down, and took the ladies home. But the whole night long Thumbkinetta could not sleep; so she got out of bed, and plaited a pretty coverlet of hay, and took it down, and wrapped it round the dead bird; and soft cotton, that she had found in the Field-mouse's parlour, she tucked about the sides of the bird, so that it might lie warm in the cold earth.

"Farewell, thou pretty little bird!" she said. "Farewell, and thanks for thy beautiful song in the summer, when all the trees were green, and the sun shone warm upon us." Then she laid her head against the bird's breast, but started back, for there seemed to be something within it beating. It was the bird's heart: it was not dead; it had been lying in a trance; and now that it grew warm, its life returned again.

In the autumn the swallows all fly away to warmer lands; but if one of them should happen to lag behind, it freezes till it falls quite numb, and lies where it falls, and the cold snow gathers over it.

Thumbkinetta trembled with affright; the bird was very, very big, compared with her, who was only a thumb long. But she took heart again, tucked the cotton closer round the poor swallow, and fetched a leaf of spear-mint, that she had used for herself as a blanket, and laid it over the bird's head.

Next night she stole down to it again, and it was now quite alive; but still so feeble, it could only cast up its eyes for an instant, and look at Thumbkinetta, as she stood by with a piece of touchwood, in her hand, for she had no other lantern.

"Thanks, thou lovely little child!" said the sick Swallow to her. "I have got so beautifully warm, I shall soon recover strength, and be able to fly out again in the warm sunshine."

"Ah!" said Thumbkinetta, "it is cold out o' doors. It is all snowing and freezing. Keep quiet in your warm bed, and I will look after you."

Then she brought water in a flower's petal to the Swallow; and it drank, and told her how it had rent one of its wings in a bramble, and so could not fly so well as the

other swallows, who sped far away to foreign lands. At last it had sunk to the ground; after this it remembered nothing, and it had no notion at all how it came hither.

For the rest of the winter it remained underground, and Thumbkinetta nursed it kindly, and loved it dearly. But neither the Mole nor the Field-mouse were told anything about it; for they, you know, would have shown no favour to the poor forlorn Swallow.

As soon as spring came, and the sun sent warmth through the upper crust of earth, the Swallow bade farewell to Thumbkinetta, and she opened up the hole which the Mole had made before. The sun shone right down it, and the Swallow asked whether she would not go with him; she might sit on his back, and they would fly far away into the green forest. But Thumbkinetta knew it would grieve the old Field-mouse if she left her thus, and so she said, "No, I cannot go."

"Farewell, then; farewell, thou kind and comely one!" said the Swallow, and flew out into the sunshine. Thumbkinetta looked after him, and her eyes filled—she was so fond of the poor Swallow.

"Twitterit! twitterit!" sang the bird, and flew away into the green forest.

It was now a sad time for Thumbkinetta. She was not allowed to go out into the warm sunshine. The corn, too, that had been sown in the field above the Field-mouse's house, grew up high, and became quite a dense forest for the poor little maid, who was only the length of your thumb.

"All the summer you must work away at your wedding dress," said the Field-mouse to her; for by this time that tiresome old Mr. Mole had really come courting in his black velvet pelisse. "You shall have both woollens and cottons, child; you shall have something to lie in, and something to sit on, when you are Mrs. Mole."

Thumbkinetta had to spin at a distaff, and the Field-mouse engaged four spiders to weave both night and day. Every evening Mr. Mole paid a visit, and repeated the same old twaddle,—how when summer came to an end the sun would not shine so hot—just now it baked the earth as hard as a stone. Ay, and when summer was over, then would come his wedding with Thumbkinetta! But all this was no amusement for her, poor thing, for she did not feel any liking for that tiresome Mr. Mole. Every morning when the sun rose, and every evening when it set, she stole out into the doorway; and when the wind blew the ears of corn apart, and she could see the blue sky, she thought how bright and beautiful it was out here, and longed to see the dear Swallow once more, but he never came again; and she thought he must be far away among the beautiful green woodlands.

When autumn came Thumbkinetta had her outfit quite ready.

"In four weeks' time the wedding will come off," said the Field-mouse to her. But she wept and said she would not have that tiresome Mr. Mole.

"Fiddle-diddle, child!" said the Field-mouse; "don't you be obstinate, or I shall bite you with my white tooth. Why, it is a charming man you are going to have!

TOMMELISE BORNE ON THE SWALLOW'S
BACK TO THE SOUTH, WHERE SHE SEES
THE FAIRY FLOWER-PRINCE.



The queen herself has got nothing to compare with his black velvet pelisse. He has plenty, too, both in kitchen and cellar. Thank your kind stars for such a husband!"

And now the day arrived for the wedding. Mr. Mole had already come to fetch Thumbkinetta. She was now to live with him deep down underground, and never go out into the warm sunshine, for that he could not endure. The poor thing was distressed indeed, to think she must say good-bye to the beautiful sun, which even at the Fieldmouse's she had got leave to see, if only from the doorway.

"Farewell, thou bright sun!" she cried, stretching her arms aloft; and she ventured a step or two beyond the door, for now the corn had been reaped, and only the dry stubble remained behind. "Farewell, farewell!" she said, and threw her tiny arms round a little red flower that grew there: "greet the Swallow from me, if thou should'st see him."

"Twitterit! twitterit!"—went a voice overhead; she looked up, it was the Swallow himself, just wheeling by!—and delighted he was to see her. She told him how she was being forced to take that ugly Mole for a husband, and how she was to live where the sun would never shine. She could not help crying as she told it.

"Winter is coming on," said the Swallow; "I am flying to the warm lands far away, will you go with me? You can sit on my back, only fasten yourself on with your sash, and then we will fly away from the ugly Mole and his dark room; far away over the mountains to the warm lands, where the sun shines fairer than here, where there is always summer, and there always are beautiful flowers. Only fly with me, my sweet little Thumbkinetta, thou who broughtest me back to life, when I lay frozen in the dark earthy pit!"

"Yes, I will fly with thee!" said Thumbkinetta, and seated herself on the bird's back, with her feet on his open wings, and tied her girdle tight to one of his strongest feathers. And the Swallow flew high aloft, over wood and lake, high over the high mountains where the snow lies for ever. And Thumbkinetta shivered in the cold air. But then she nestled closer into the bird's warm feathers, and only thrust out her little head to see all the beautiful things underneath them.

And thus they came to the warm lands. There the sun shone much clearer than here; the sky was twice as high, and all along hedges and ditches grew the most splendid green and purple grapes. In the grove hung oranges and lemons; here there was the fragrance of myrtle and of balm; and yonder, down the highway, ran the loveliest children, sporting with many-coloured butterflies. But the Swallow flew still further on, and everything grew still more beautiful. Under stately green trees, on the shore of the deep blue sea, stood a shining white marble palace of the olden time. Vines clung around the lofty columns; under the eaves were many nests; and one of them was the nest of the Swallow, who had carried Thumbkinetta.

"This is my home," said the Swallow; "but, now, choose for thyself one of the most glorious flowers down yonder, and I will place thee there, and thy life shall be as happy as thou canst wish."

"Oh! that," she cried, "would be delightful!" and she clapped her little hands.

On the ground lay a large white marble column; it had fallen down and broken into three pieces, and between them grew splendid white flowers. The Swallow flew down with Thumbkinetta, and placed her on a broad petal of one of them. But think how she was startled, when in the flower-cup she saw a mannikin seated, as clear and transparent as if he were of glass, with a dainty golden crown upon his head, and beautiful bright wings upon his shoulders. And he was not any bigger, either, than Thumbkinetta! He was the angel of the flower. In every flower there was such another little man or woman, but this one was the king of them all.

"Oh, heavens! how handsome!" whispered Thumbkinetta to the Swallow. The little Prince looked rather frightened at the coming of the Swallow, a great bird by the side of him, who was so small and fine; but when he saw Thumbkinetta, his fears were changed to joy, for she was the prettiest maiden he had ever seen. So he took the golden crown off his head and placed it upon hers, and asked her to tell him her name, and whether she would be his bride; for then she should be queen of all the flowers. Ay, that was a husband indeed; not at all like Dame Toad's son, nor yet Mr. Mole, with his black velvet pelisse. So this time she answered, yes; and straight out of every flower there came a lord or a lady—so lovely, that it was a pleasure to see them. Each brought her a present; and the best of all was a pair of wings from a great white May-fly. These they fastened on to her back, and then she could fly from flower to flower. Great was the jubilee now; and the Swallow sat up in his nest, and sang his very best to them; but in his heart of hearts he was sad, for he loved Thumbkinetta dearly, and would fain have never parted from her.

"No longer shalt thou be named Thumbkinetta," said the angel of the flower; "That is an ugly name, and thou art so beautiful! We will call thee Maia!"

"Farewell! farewell!" sang the Swallow, and flew once more away from the warm lands; flew back, far away, even unto Denmark. There he had a little nest, over the window where lives the man who knows how to tell fairy tales. To him the Swallow sang his "twitterit! twitterit!" and from this we have come to learn the whole story.





THE ANGEL.



WHENEVER a good child dies, an Angel of God comes down to earth, takes the dead child in his arms, spreads out his great white wings, flies over all the places that the child was fond of, and gathers a handful of flowers; and these he bears up to heaven, that they may bloom there, more beautiful even than they did on earth. The good God presses all the flowers to his heart; but the one that finds favour with him most he kisses, and this flower receives a voice, and can join in the great Song of Bliss."

See, all this was told by an Angel of God, while bearing a dead child up to heaven; and the child heard it as in a dream. And they flew over the places near the home, where the little one used to play, and they passed through gardens of brilliant flowers.

"Now, which shall we take with us, and plant in heaven?" asked the Angel.

And there stood there a slender budding rose-tree; but an evil hand had broken the stem, and the sprays, full of half-blown rosebuds, were hanging down, withered all around.

"That poor tree!" said the child, "take it, that it may blossom before God."

And the Angel took it; and he kissed the child for this, and the little one half opened his dreaming eyes. Then they chose some of the rich showy flowers; but they also plucked the despised marigold and the wild heartsease.

"Now we have got flowers," said the child. And the Angel nodded assent; but still he did not fly up towards God.

It was night, and all was dead stillness. They tarried over the great city, and bent their flight down through one of the narrowest lanes, where there lay heaps of straw and ashes and other rubbish. It had just been flitting-day: rags and tatters lay about, broken crockery, scraps of plaster, crowns of old hats—every squalid thing one can think of. And the Angel pointed out, in the middle of the heap, some bits of a flower-pot, and a clod of earth that had fallen out of it, and was held together by the roots of a large withered field-flower—a worthless thing, that had therefore been thrown into the street.

"This we will take with us," said the Angel. "I will tell thee all about it as we fly." Then their flight began, and the Angel told his story.

"Down yonder in the narrow lane, in the low cellar, there lived a poor boy. From his early childhood he had been bedridden. When he was at his strongest, he could take a turn on his crutches up and down the small room, and that was all. There were a few days in summer when the sun fell for half an hour into the forepart of the cellar; and then, when the little boy had sat there awhile, and let the sun shine warm upon him, and held his fingers up before his face to see the red blood in them, his friends would say: 'To-day he has been out.' He only knew the woods in their lovely springtide green by this, that the neighbour's boy used to bring him the first green beechen spray; and he held it over his head, and dreamed he was under the beech-trees, with the sun shining and the birds singing. One day in spring the neighbour's boy brought him some field-flowers, and one among them happened to have come up by the roots; so this they planted in a flower-pot, and placed in the window near his bed. And the flower was planted with a lucky hand. It grew, put forth new shoots, and bore blossoms every year. It became for the sick boy the most glorious flower-garden—his little treasure here on earth. He watered it, and nursed it, and took care that it caught every sunbeam, down to the very last one that glided over the low window. And it grew to be a part of his dreamy life, for it was for him alone it bloomed, and shed fragrance, and gladdened the eye. And he turned towards it in death, when our Lord called him. One year now has he been with God: one year has the flower stood neglected in the window. It has withered; and so, this flitting-day, it has been cast on to the dust-heap in the street. And this is the flower—the poor withered flower—that has been taken with us in our nosegay; for this flower has given more joy than the richest one in the Queen's garden."

"But how comest thou to know all this," said the child, whom the Angel was bearing up to heaven.

"How do I know it," returned the Angel. "I was myself the sick boy who went upon crutches. Should I not know my own flower?"

And the child opened his eyes wide, and looked into the Angel's beautiful beaming face, and that very moment they were in God's heaven, where there was joy and gladness. And God pressed the dead child to his heart; and then he got wings like the other Angel, and flew with him hand in hand.

And God pressed all the flowers to his heart; but the poor withered field-flower he kissed; and a voice was given it, and so it joined in song with all the angels who float around God, some quite near, and others ranged around them in large circles, still further and further off, into endless space,—but all equally happy.

And they all sang together, great and small—the good, blessed child, and the poor withered field-flower, that had lain withered and cast away on the dust-heap, amid the flitting-day rubbish in the narrow, murky lane.

THE CHILD AFTER DEATH IN THE
ANGEL'S ARMS PITIES THE POOR ROSE TREE
WITH ITS BUDS AND FLOWERS CRUSHED
DOWN AND BROKEN.



THE GARDEN OF PARADISE.



HERE was a king's son; no one had so many and such pretty books as he; everything that had ever happened in the world he could read about in them, and see represented in their beautiful pictures. About every people and every country, they gave him information. But where the Garden of Paradise could be found—about that there was not one word in them! and that was just the very thing he wanted to know.

His grandmother had told him, when he was still quite little, but was soon going to begin school, that every flower in the Paradise Garden was the sweetest of cakes, and its stamina were the finest of wines. On one flower there was history, on another geography or arithmetic. One only wanted to eat cake, and one knew one's lesson; the more one ate, the more one took in of history, geography, and arithmetic.

This he believed at that time; but as he grew a bigger boy, learned more, and became wiser, he soon understood that there must be some very different sort of beauty in the Paradise Garden.

Oh, why ever did Eve pick from the tree of knowledge! Why did Adam eat of the forbidden fruit! It ought to have been I, then it would never have happened! Never would sin have entered the world!" So he said then; and he said so still when he was seventeen years old. The Paradise Garden filled all his thoughts.

One day he walked out in the forest; he walked alone, for that was his greatest pleasure.

The evening fell, the clouds gathered; it rained as if the sky was one great flood-gate, with all the water rushing out. It grew as dark as midnight at the bottom of a well. Now he slipped on the wet grass; now he stumbled over the rough stones that stuck up from the rocky ground. Everything was running with water; there was not a dry thread on the poor Prince. He had to scramble over great crags, where the water oozed out of the deep moss. He was nearly exhausted. Then he heard a strange roaring, and before him was a large lighted cavern. In the middle of it burned a fire,

at which a whole stag might be roasted:—and that was just being done! A most noble stag, with high antlers, was spitted, and being slowly turned round between two trunks of fir-trees. An elderly woman, tall and strong, as if she were a man in disguise, sat by the fire, throwing one log after another upon it."

"Come a bit nearer," said she; "sit down, and dry yourself at the fire."

"There is a nasty draught here," said the Prince, as he sat down on the ground.

"It will be still worse when my sons come home," rejoined the woman. "You are in the cavern of the winds here. My sons are the four winds of the world. Do you understand that, now?"

"Who are your sons?" asked the Prince.

"Oh, 'tis no good answering a stupid asker!" said the woman. "My sons have gone off for a spree; they're playing at hockey with the clouds up in the state-room!" and she pointed up in the air.

"Oh, indeed!" said the Prince. "You have rather a rough way of speaking, by the bye, and are not so gentle as most of the women I meet."

"Ay, they have nothing else to do, I'll be bound! I *must* be rough, if I am to keep my boys in order. But that I can manage, though they *have* got stiff necks. Do you see those four sacks hanging on the wall? They fear those, just as you used to fear the rod behind the looking-glass. I can bend the boys double, and put them in the sacks. And I listen to no nonsense, I can tell you. There they must bide. No more gadding about for them till I think fit and proper! But here comes one of them."

It was the North-wind, who came tramping in with an icy chill. Large hailstones hopped before him on the floor, and snowflakes drifted all round. He wore trousers and jacket of bearskin, a sealskin cap came down over his ears, long icicles hung from his beard, and one hailstone after another slid down the collar of his jacket.

"Do not go to the fire all at once," said the Prince, "or you are likely to get chilblains on your face and hands."

"Chilblains!" said the North-wind, laughing loud. "Chilblains for me! that would be rare fun! But what kind of spindle-shanks have we here? How came *you* in the cavern of the winds?"

"He is my guest," said the old woman. "Take that for an answer; and if it doesn't quiet you—there is the sack! And now, stranger, you've had a taste of my judgments."

This settled the matter; and the North-wind told whence he came, and where he had been for nearly a whole month.

"I come from the Polar Seas," he said; "I have been on Bear Island, with the Russian walrus-hunters. I sat by the helm and slept, when they first sailed from the North Cape. Whenever I wakened up a bit, Mother Carey's chickens flew about my legs. 'Tis a funny bird, that! he gives one sharp stroke with his wings, then holds them straight out, and goes full speed without moving them again."

"Don't be spinning such a long yarn!" said the Winds' Mother. "And so you came to Bear Island?"

"That is a fine place; that's a floor to dance upon—flat as a plate! Half-thawed snow and moss, sharp stones, and skeletons of walruses and polar bears lay mixed together. They looked like giants' arms and legs crusted with green mould; one might suppose the sun had never blinked upon them. I puffed the mist aside, to get a look at the shed. It was a house built of wreck-wood, and covered with raw walrus hides, which were turned inside out, and spotted with red and green. On the roof sat a live polar bear, growling. I went down to the strand to look at the birds' nests; at the unfledged young, that screeched and gaped; and I blew down their thousands of throats, and they learned to hold their jaw. Lowest of all rolled the walruses, like living entrails or giant maggots with wild-boar heads and yard-long tusks."

"You tell your story well, my lad!" said the mother; "it makes my mouth water to hear you."

"And now for the chase! The harpoon was driven into the breast of the walrus, till the streaming blood spouted up like a fountain over the ice. Then I began to think of my music. I blew my bugle-call; and let my own ships, the mountainous icebergs, squeeze the boats between them. Heigh! how the crew whistled! How they shrieked, but I whistled louder! Dead whales, chests, and cordage, were shot out, pell-mell, upon the ice! I showered snow-flakes around them, and sent them in their ice-bound ships, booty and all, drifting south, there to get their fill of salt water. They will never make for Bear Island again!"

"So you have been doing mischief!" said the Mother of the Winds.

"What good I have done, others may tell you!" he replied. "But here we have my brother of the West. Him I like best of all. He smacks of the sea, and brings such a blessed freshness with him."

"Is that the little Zephyr?" asked the Prince.

"Zephyr it is, sure enough!" said the old woman; "but not so very little, though. In former days he was a handsome boy, but that is all over now."

He looked like a savage, only he wore a padded hat to guard his head. In his hand was a club of mahogany, hewn in American woods—nothing less could suffice for him.

"Where do you come from?" asked the Mother.

"From the forest wilds," said he; "where the thorny lianas weave hedges between tree and tree, where the watersnake lies at ease in the wet grass, and Nature gets on without any need of man!"

"What did you find to do there?"

"I watched the deep river, how it rushed headlong from the cliffs, scattered into dust, and flew towards the clouds to bear the rainbow. I saw the wild buffalo swimming the river: the current seized him, and he drove along with a flock of wild ducks round

him. But while the ducks flew up before the waters fell, the buffalo went down with it. The sight of this tickled me, and I blew a storm, till the world-old trees were floating or splitting in pieces."

"And that is all you have done?" asked the old woman.

"I have cut summersaults in the savannahs: I have patted the wild horses, and shaken down cocoa-nuts! Ay, ay, I have got stories to tell! but one must not say all that one knows: no need to teach you that, old lady!" And so saying he kissed his Mother, till she nearly fell backwards. A wild fellow he was—no doubt of it!

Next came the South-wind, in a turban and flowing Bedouin cloak.

"'Tis terribly cold here!" said he, throwing wood on the fire: "one can easily tell that the North-wind has been here before me."

"Why, it's hot enough to roast a Polar-bear!" said the North-wind.

"You are a Polar-bear yourself," returned the South-wind.

"Do you both want to go into the sack?" said the old woman. "Sit down on the stone there, and tell us where you have been."

"In Africa, Mother!" he answered, "hunting lions in Caffre-land, along with the Hottentots. There are long dales of grass there, green as an olive. The gnu danced there; and the ostrich ran races with me; but I stretch a quicker leg than he can. I went off to the desert, to the yellow sand,—it looks like the bottom of the sea. I met a caravan: they were killing their last camel to get water to drink—a mighty little they got of it. The sun above roasted them: the sands beneath broiled them. There was no boundary to the far-spreading desert. Then I burrowed down in the fine loose sand and whirled it aloft in great pillars: that was a rare dance! You should have seen how the dromedary stood dismayed, and how the merchant shaded his head with his caftan. He threw himself before me, as before Allah, his God! Now they are buried: a pyramid of sand stands over them, one and all. Some day, when I puff it away, the sun will bleach the white bones; and the traveller may see men have been there before him; and that is a hard thing to believe in the desert!"

"You have been doing mischief too, then!" said the Mother. "March into the sack!" and before he was aware, she had the South-wind round his waist and into the sack: it rolled about on the floor, but she sat down on it, and then it was obliged to lie quiet.

"Those are lively boys of yours!" said the Prince.

"Not so far amiss, either!" she answered; "and I can manage them. Here we have the fourth!"

It was the East-wind: he was dressed as a Chinaman.

"So you come from that quarter!" said the Mother. "I thought you had been in Paradise Garden."

"I shall fly there to-morrow," said the East-wind: "to-morrow it is a hundred years since I was there. I have just come from China, where I have danced round the

porcelain tower, and made all the bells go tingle-ingle. In the street below the officials were being flogged: the bamboo was broken on their backs. They were of all ranks, from the first to the ninth. And they all kept shouting, 'Many thanks, my fatherly benefactor!' But that was not what they meant, exactly! And I clinked the bells and sang *tsing, tsang, tsu!*"

"That was rude of you!" said the Mother. "It is just as well that you are going to-morrow to the Paradise Garden; it always improves your manners. Mind you drink deep of Wisdom's well, and bring a little bottle of it home to me."

"I will, Mother," said the East-wind. "But why have you been putting my brother of the South into the sack? Out with him now! I must make him tell me about Bird Phoenix; for the Princess of Paradise Garden always wants to hear of the bird, when every hundredth year I pay her my visit. Open the sack, do! and then you are my sweetest Mother; and I will give you two pockets full of tea, fresh and green as when I first picked it in its own bed."

"Well, for the tea's sake, and because you are my darling, I *will* open the sack." And so she did, and the South-wind crawled out; but he looked quite down in the mouth, because the strange Prince had seen it all.

"Here is a palm-leaf for the Princess," said the South-wind, "this leaf old Bird Phœni, the only one in the world, has given me. He has scratched on it, with his beak, the chronicle of his whole life, of all the hundred years he lived. Now she may have it to read, all to herself. I saw how Bird Phoenix set his own nest on fire, and burned himself, like a Hindoo widow. How the dry branches did crackle; and what a smoke, what an odour! At last all was sheer flame, and old Bird Phoenix turned to ashes. But his egg lay glowing red-hot in the fire; it burst with a loud crack, and the young one flew out; and now he reigns over all the birds in the world, and is the only Bird Phoenix. He has pecked a hole in the palm-leaf I give you; that is his greeting to the Princess!"

"Now, let us have something to eat," said the Mother of the Winds. So they all sat down to eat of the roasted stag; and the Prince sat next to the East-wind, and they soon became good friends.

"Pray tell me," said the Prince, "what Princess it is you have been talking of; and where, may I ask, is the Paradise Garden?"

"Oh, ho!" said the East-wind. "Do you think of going there? Well, you shall fly with me to-morrow morning. One thing I must tell you, though; no human being has been there since Adam and Eve's time. You know of them, I suppose, from the Bible history?"

"Of course I do," said the Prince.

"Well, when they were driven out of the garden, it sank under the earth; but it still retains its warm sunshine, its balmy air, and all its glorious beauty. The Fairy Queen lives there; and there too is the Island of Bliss, where death never comes, and

where existence is enjoyment. Get on to my back to-morrow, and I will take you with me. I think we can manage it; but no more gossip just now, for I want to sleep."

So they all went to sleep.

Early next morning the Prince awoke, and was not a little amazed at finding himself above the clouds already. He was seated on the back of the East-wind, who was keeping a trusty hold upon him. They were so high in the air that fields and forests, rivers and lakes, looked like a large coloured map.

"Good morning," said the East-wind. "You might as well have slept a little longer, for there is not much to be seen on the flat land underneath us; unless indeed, you find amusement in counting churches; see how they stand like dots of chalk on the green board." It was the fields and meadows he called "the green board."

"It was uncivil to leave, without my saying good bye to your mother and brothers," said the Prince.

"When a man sleeps he's held excused," said the East-wind, and flew even faster than before: one could tell *that* by listening to the tops of the forests, for all the boughs and leaves rattled as they sped above them; one could tell it too by the sea and the lakes, for wherever they flew, the billows rolled higher, and the great ships bowed deep in the water like swimming swans.

In the evening, when it grew dark, it was curious to see the large towns, how the lights in them gleamed, now here now there; it was just like watching the sparks in a burnt bit of paper, that one used to call "children going home from school." The Prince clapped his hands, but the East-wind told him he had better keep quiet and hold fast, or he might chance to fall, and be left hanging on a church-spire.

The Eagle of the black woods flew lightly, but the East-wind flew lighter still. The Cossack on his little horse rode at full speed over the plains, but the Prince rode at a speed beyond compare.

"Now you can see the Himalayas!" said the East-wind; "that is the highest mountain range in Asia. We shall soon come now to the Paradise Garden." They turned more towards the south, and soon met the odours of flowers and spices. Figs and pomegranates grew wild, and the wild vine bore blue and red grapes. Here they both lighted down, and stretched themselves on the soft grass, where the flowers nodded to the wind, as if they would fain say, "Welcome back again!"

"Are we now in the Paradise Garden?" asked the Prince.

"No, indeed!" answered the East-wind; "but we shall soon be there. Do you see the rocky wall yonder, and the great cave, where the vines are hanging like large green curtains? That we shall have to go through. Wrap yourself in your cloak: here the sun is scorching; but one step further, and it is icy cold. The bird, that skims along the mouth of the cave, has the wing on this side in warm summer, and the wing on the other side in cold winter."

"And so that is the way to the Paradise Garden?" said the Prince.

They went into the cave: ugh! it was icy cold indeed! but not for long. The East-wind spread out his wings, and they gave light like the clearest fire; and, then, what a cavern! Great stone blocks, from which water was trickling, hung in the strangest forms above them. Now the cave was so narrow that they had to crawl on hands and feet; now so high and wide, that it was like the open air. It looked like burial chapels, with mute organ-pipes and petrified banners.

"Surely we are taking the path of Death to reach the Paradise Garden?" said the Prince, but the East-wind made no reply, except by pointing far ahead,—and, lo! a glorious blue light was beaming forth to meet them. The stone blocks above them became more and more a mist, that at length cleared away, like a white cloud in moon-light. And now they breathed the most delicious air, fresh as on the mountain-top, yet fragrant as if with roses of the valley.

Here there flowed a river as clear as the air itself, and the fishes were like gold and silver. Purple eels, that shot blue fire-sparks at every turn, played in the water. The broad lily-leaves had the hues of the rainbow, and the flower itself was an orange-coloured flame, to which the water gave nourishment, even as oil to a burning lamp. A solid bridge of marble, as cunningly and finely worked as if it were lace and pearl embroidery, led over the water to the Isle of Bliss, where the Paradise Garden bloomed.

The East-wind took the Prince on his arms, and carried him over. Here the flowers and leaves sang the most beautiful songs of his childhood, but in richer strains of melody than any human voices could utter.

Were they palm-trees or gigantic water-plants growing here? Such tall and juicy trees the Prince had never seen before. Their boughs were festooned with the strangest creepers, such as are found, in gold and bright colours, on the margins of old missals, or twined about their initial letters: fantastic compounds of birds and flowers and scrolls. Near them, in the grass, stood a flock of peacocks, with their glittering tails outspread. Yes, surely they were peacocks! Yet no; when the Prince touched them, he saw they were no birds, but plants—great dock-leaves, that glittered here like peacock's tails. The lion and the tiger sported like lissom cats among the green hedgerows, that smelt like the blossoms of the olive; and the lion and the tiger were tame: the wood-pigeon, as brilliant as the finest pearl, flapped her wings against the lion's mane; and the antelope stood still, and nodded his head, as if wishing to join in the gambol.

And now came the Fairy of Paradise. Her garments shone like the sun, and her face was gentle as that of a glad mother rejoicing over her child. She was so young and so beautiful! and fair young maidens followed her, each with a glittering star in her hair.

The East-wind gave her the written leaf from Bird Phœnix, and her eyes sparkled with joy. She took the Prince by the hand, and led him into the palace, where the walls had the colours of gorgeous tulip leaves when they are held towards the sun. The very

dome was one vast radiant flower, and the more one gazed up into it, the deeper seemed its chalice. The Prince stepped up to the window, and looked through one of the panes, and there he saw the Tree of Knowledge, with the Serpent, and with Adam and Eve standing by. "Have they not been driven out?" he asked. And the Fairy smiled, and explained to him that Time had burned its image into every pane, but not as in the pictures that men are wont to see; no, there was real life in this; the leaves of the tree moved, and the figures came and went as if reflected in a mirror. He looked through another pane, and there was Jacob's Dream; every step of the ladder led straight towards heaven, and the angels with great wings floated up and down. Yes, everything that had happened in this world lived and moved on these panes of glass; only Time itself could have made such clever pictures.

The Fairy smiled, and led him into a hall, large and lofty. The walls seemed to be transparent paintings, with each face lovelier than the other; they were millions of blessed souls that smiled and sang, their voices blending in one sweet melody; those that were highest were so small they seemed less than the smallest rosebud, that can only be drawn like a dot on the paper. In the midst of the hall stood a tall tree, with luxuriant drooping branches; golden apples, great and small, hung like oranges among the green leaves. This was the Tree of Knowledge, and this the fruit of which Adam and Eve had eaten. From every leaf there dropped a shining red dew-drop; it looked as though the tree wept tears of blood.

"Let us enter the boat now," said the Fairy; "yonder, on the swelling waves, we shall be refreshed with changing scenes. The boat rocks up and down, though it never moves further on; and all the lands of the world will come gliding past our eyes." And it was strange to see how all the coast was moving. Here came the snow-crowned Alps, with their clouds and dark pine-trees: a horn sent forth its melancholy tones, and the herdsman pealed a long sweet halloo from the valley. Now the banana-tree bent its long, drooping branches over the boat: jet-black swans swam on the water, and the strangest-looking flowers and animals appeared on the shores; it was New Holland, the fifth quarter of the world, that, with a distant glimpse of blue mountains, went gliding by. Now one heard the song of priests, and saw the savages dance to sound of drums and bone fifes. The Pyramids of Egypt, reaching up into the clouds, sailed past, together with fallen columns and Sphinxes half buried in the sand. The Northern Lights flickered over the *jökuls*¹ of the north—fireworks that no skill could imitate. The Prince, indeed, saw a hundred times more, and was a hundred times happier, than we could ever describe.

"And may I always remain here?" he asked.

"That depends upon yourself," answered the Fairy. "If you do not yield, like Adam, to temptations of doing what is forbidden, then you may stay here for ever!"

¹ *Jökull*, an Icelandic word, meaning *ice-mountain*.

"I shall not touch the apples on the Tree of Knowledge," said the Prince; "here are full a thousand fruits as fine as they!"

"Examine yourself, and if you do not feel strong enough, go back with the East-wind who brought you. He is just about to fly back, and will not return for a hundred years. The time will pass away here as if it were only a hundred hours; but that is a long time for temptation and sin. Every evening, when I leave you, I must lure you, calling, 'Follow me!' I must beckon with my hand, but mind you stay behind! Do not go with me, for with every step your longing will grow stronger; you will enter the hall where grows the Tree of Knowledge: I sleep under its fragrant, drooping branches: you will bend over me, and I must smile; but if you kiss my lips, Paradise will sink deep into the ground, and be lost for you. The sharp wind of the desert will whistle around you, the cold rain will drip from your hair, and sorrow and care will be your inheritance."

"I will stay," said the Prince; and the East-wind kissed him on the brow, and said, "Be strong, and we shall meet here again after a hundred years. Farewell, farewell!" And the East-wind spread out his large wings; they shone like the sheet lightning in harvest-time, or northern lights in the cold winter. "Farewell, farewell!" resounded from trees and flowers. Storks and pelicans flew in rows, like streaming ribbons, and went along with him to the limits of the Garden.

"Now we will begin our dances," said the Fairy. "I shall wind up with dancing with you; and when the sun is sinking you will see me beckon, you will hear me say, 'Follow me!' but mind you do it not! I must repeat this every evening for a hundred years; but every time the hour is past, you will gain more strength, till at last you will never think of following. This evening it is the first time. I have warned you!"

And the Fairy led him into a vast hall of white transparent lilies; and in each flower the yellow stamens formed a little golden harp that poured forth the music both of pipes and strings. The fairest girls, lithe and slender, and clad in loose thin robes, that scarcely veiled their limbs, hovered in the dance, and sang how excellent it was to live! and how they would never die; and how the Paradise Garden would bloom for ever!

The sun went down. The whole sky was a sheet of gold, and it tinged the lilies with a tender rose. The Prince drank of the beaded wine which the maidens handed him; and he felt a rapture he had never known before. He saw the back of the hall open before him, and the Tree of Knowledge stood there in a splendour that dazzled his eyes. There was a song that came from it, soft and winning as the voice of his mother; and it seemed as if she sang, "My child, my beloved child!"

Then the Fairy beckoned, and called with a fondling voice, "Come, follow me! Come, follow me!" And he rushed towards her and forgot his vow,—forgot it on the very first evening; and still she beckoned and she smiled. The fragrance, the spicy fragrance around, grew stronger; the harps rang sweeter and sweeter; and it seemed as if the millions of smiling heads in the hall where grew the tree, nodded and sang, 'Man

must know all; man is the lord of earth!" And they were no longer tears of blood that fell from the Tree of Knowledge; they were ruddy sparkling stars! he thought.

"Come, follow me! Come, follow me!" he heard again in quivering tones; and, at every step forward, the Prince's cheeks glowed hotter; his pulse beat stronger. "I must!" he said, "It is no sin! it cannot be! Why not follow after Mirth and Beauty? I will look at her sleeping. Nothing is lost if only I do not kiss her; and that I shall not do! I am strong,—my will is firm!"

And the Fairy threw off her beaming garments, bent the branches back, and in another moment was concealed within them.

"I have not sinned yet," said the Prince; "neither will I." And he drew aside the branches. She lay asleep already; beautiful, as only the Fairy of Paradise Garden could be. She smiled in her dreams. He bent over her, and saw tears trembling in her eye-lashes. "Weepest thou for me?" he whispered. "Do not weep, thou beautiful woman! now first do I conceive the joy of Paradise; it streams through my blood, through my soul. I feel the power of the cherubim, and eternal life in my earthly body! Let an eternal night come; one minute like this is plenty of riches!" And he kissed the tear from her eye,—his lips touched hers!

Then a thunder peal rolled forth, more deep and terrible than was ever heard before, and all things fell crashing together. The beautiful Fairy, the blooming Paradise, sank deep, deep down. The Prince saw it dwindling in the black night,—like a small star it glimmered in the far distance. The chill of death passed through his limbs; he closed his eyes, and lay long as dead.

The cold rain fell upon his face, the sharp wind whistled round his head; his mind came back to him. "What have I done?" he sighed. "I have sinned like Adam! sinned, so that Paradise has sunk deep down!" and he opened his eyes. He still saw the star, far away—the star that glittered like the fallen Paradise; it was the morning-star in the sky.

He arose; he was in the great wood near the cavern of the Winds. The Mother of the Winds sat by his side. She looked angry, and lifted her arm in the air.

"The very first evening!" she said. "Ay, just as I thought it would be! If you were a boy of mine, you should go straight into the sack!"

"And so he will," said Death. This was a strong old man, with a scythe in his hand, and with long black wings. "In the coffin will he be laid; but not yet awhile. I will only mark him. Then he may wander about the world another hour or two; make atonement for his sins; grow good, and better still. I shall come in my due time. When he least expects it, I shall put him into the black coffin, set it on my head and fly upwards to the stars. The Paradise Garden blooms there too; and if he be good, and holy, he may enter in. But if his thoughts be wicked, and his heart still full of sin, he will sink lower even than Paradise sank; and only every thousandth year shall I fetch him again, that he may either sink deeper, or else remain for ever upon yonder glittering star."



THE SNOW QUEEN.

A TALE IN SEVEN GOSSIPS.

GOSSIP THE FIRST.

WHICH TREATS OF THE MIRROR AND THE FRAGMENTS.



WELL, then! now we are beginning. When we are at the end of our Gossip, we shall know more than we do now. For indeed it was a wicked Troll: it was one of the very worst; it was the great Arch-Troll himself! One day he was in high good humour; for he had made a mirror which had this gift, that whatever was reflected in it, if good and beautiful, shrank up into next to nothing; but if worthless and uncouth, stood out viler and coarser than before. The freshest landscapes looked in it like boiled spinach: the finest men and women became quite repulsive, or they stood on their heads, or had no stomachs, or had their features so twisted that one could not know them; and if any one had a freckle, it would be sure to spread out over his nose and mouth. It was immensely funny, said the Arch-Troll. If a good and holy thought touched a man's heart, such a grin would come into the mirror, that the Arch-Troll would burst out laughing at his own handiwork. All his scholars (for he kept a school of the Black Art) talked about it everywhere as a miracle; people might now for the first time, they boasted, see the world and its inhabitants as they really were. They carried the mirror from place to place; and at last there was no country, and no man upon earth, that had not been disfigured in it. Now they desired to fly up to heaven also, and to make a mock of the angels and of our Lord Himself. They flew aloft with the mirror, and it grinned and shook till they could hardly hold it. Higher they flew and higher, nearer to our Lord and His angels; then the mirror shook so frightfully with grinning, that it slipped from their hands, and was dashed down on earth, and broke into a hundred million billion pieces, and ever so many more. But now it did greater mischief than ever. For some

of the bits were hardly as big as a grain of sand; and these were blown about the world, and whenever they got into one's eyes, they would stick there; and then one saw everything upside down, or else one had only eyes for what was bad in anything. For in the smallest morsel there was the same sort of power as there had been in the whole mirror. Some people got a splinter of it into the heart even; and then, horrible to tell, the heart became a lump of ice. Other fragments were large enough to be used as window-panes; but it was just as well not to look at one's friends through any of these. Others were made into spectacles; and a pretty thing it was when a judge put on a pair of them, to look well into a case before deciding it! Then the Evil One would split his sides with laughing: it tickled him so prodigiously. But there were many other kinds of glass atoms, meanwhile, that kept floating at random in the air. Only listen, and you shall hear.

GOSSIP THE SECOND.

A LITTLE BOY AND A LITTLE GIRL.



N the middle of the great city, where there are so many houses and people, that there is no room for each to have his own little garden, and where most of them must therefore be contented with flowers in pots, there were two poor children nevertheless, who *did* have a garden somewhat bigger than a flowerpot. They were not brother and sister, but they loved each other as much as if they had been. Their parents were next-door neighbours; they lived up in the garrets of two adjoining roofs, with the gutter running between them, and there were two little windows projecting from the roofs, and facing each other, so that one only had to step over the gutter, to get from one window to the other.

The two families had each a great wooden box outside, where they grew such pot-herbs as they wanted, besides a little rosebush. There was one bush in each box, and both flourished well. Now the parents took a fancy to setting the boxes right across the gutter; and they nearly reached from window to window, and looked exactly like two flowerbeds. The peas hung their tendrils over the boxes, and the rosebushes sent out long shoots, that wound up the windows, and bent towards each other; it was almost a triumphal arch of foliage and flowers. The boxes were very high, and the children knew that they must not clamber up them; so they were often allowed to step out, and sit on their small stools under the roses, and there they enjoyed themselves amazingly.

When winter came there was an end of these pleasures. The windows were often quite frosted over; but they heated coppers on the stove, and laid the hot coin on the frosted pane, and this marked each window with a splendid peep-hole, as round as round could be; and from each there used to peer a soft loving eye—the little boy's on one side,

and the little girl's on the other. His name was Kay, and hers was Gerda. In summer time they could have met together in one jump; but now, in winter, they had ever so many stairs to go down, and as many to get up again; while out-o'-doors the snow was falling.

"There are the white bees swarming!" old Grandmother would say.

"Have they got a Queen-bee too?" asked the little boy: for he knew there was always a Queen among the real bees.

"That they have!" said Grandmother. "Yonder she flies in the thickest of the swarm. She is the largest of them all: she never settles on earth; but she flies up again into the black cloud. Many a winter night does she flit through the streets, peeping in at the windows; and then they are frosted over with strange shapes, like flowers and leaves."

"Yes, that I have seen!" said both children at once; and what they had seen they knew must be true.

"Can the Snow-Queen come in here?" asked the little girl.

"Only let her come!" said the boy, "and I'll put her on the warm stove, and then she will melt away."

But Grandmother smoothed down his hair, and told other stories.

When little Kay had gone home that evening, and was half undressed, he crept on to a chair by the window, and peered through the little round hole. A few snow-flakes were falling outside; and one, the largest of them, remained lying on the edge of one of the flower-boxes. The snow-flake grew larger and larger; and at last rose into a complete woman, clad in the finest white gauze, that seemed to be spun of millions of starlike crystals. She was very beautiful and delicate, but all of ice, glittering dazzling ice; and yet she was alive. Her wide open eyes were bright as stars; but there was no softness or peace in them. She nodded at the window, and beckoned with her hand. The little boy was frightened, and jumped down from the chair; and it seemed as if a large bird flew past the window.

There was a clear frost next day; then came a thaw; and then came spring. The sun shone: the green sprang forth: the swallows built their nests: the windows flew open: and the children sat once more in their little garden up in the gutter, above all the floors of the house.

The rosebushes blossomed better than ever that summer. The little girl had learnt a hymn to which there was a burthen about roses, and whenever she came to it she thought of her own roses. She sang it to the little boy, and he sang it with her:—

"Roses down in the vale are sweet:
And there we must go, Child Jesu to meet."

And the little ones held each other by the hand, kissed the roses, and looked up into God's clear sunshine, and sang to it as if the Jesu-child were there. Oh those summer

days, how glorious they were! and how blest it was to be out under the fresh rosetrees, that seemed as if they would never be tired of blossoming.

One day, as Kay and Gerda sat looking in their picture-book, that was full of birds and animals, it came to pass—(the clock just striking five from the great church-tower)—that Kay cried aloud, “Ugh! something has stung me in the heart! And now, something has flown into my eye!”

The little girl threw her arm round his neck, and held his blinking eyes open: no, there was nothing to be seen.

“I think it is gone!” he said. But it was not gone. It was just one of those chips that flew out of the mirror,—the Troll’s mirror, you know,—that mischievous glass which made everything great and good, that was reflected in it, appear small and unsightly, while what was mean and wicked stood out in strong colours, and any flaw in anything caught one’s eye at once. Poor Kay! he had now got a splinter in his heart also. It would soon change it to a lump of ice. It gave him no more pain just now: yet still it was there.

“What are you crying for?” he asked. “You look so ugly when you cry. There is nothing the matter with me. Phah!” he went on. “What a worm-eaten rose that is yonder; and see that other one, it’s growing quite askew. After all, they are poor, wretched roses—just like the boxes they stand in!” and he drove his foot hard against the box and tore off the two roses.

“Oh, Kay, what are you doing?” cried the little girl. And when he saw her so much frightened, he tore off another rose and ran in through his own window, away from sweet little Gerda.

After this, whenever she brought out the picture book he would say it was only fit for a baby in long clothes. And when grandmother told stories, he would always strike in with a “but;” ay, and if he could find an opportunity, he would steal behind her, put her spectacles on, and speak like her; and he acted the part so well that people could not help laughing. He soon got to mimic all the neighbours. Anything that was queer and ungainly about any of them Kay could hit off to a nicety; and then the others would say, “He has got a clever head on his shoulders, that boy has!” But, really and truly, it was the glass that did it; the glass that had got into his eye and settled in his heart. And this made him so spiteful, even against little Gerda who loved him with all her heart and soul.

His games were no longer the same as they used to be; they became quite intellectual. One winter day he came in with a large magnifying glass: it was snowing, and he held out a lappet of his blue jacket to let the snow-flakes fall on it.

“Now look through the glass, Gerda,” said he; and every flake seemed as large again, and looked like a brilliant flower or a star with ten points. It was certainly a beautiful sight.

“See, what skilful workmanship!” said Kay. “That is much more interesting now

than if they were real flowers. There is not a single fault in these; they're accurate to a hair's breadth, only it's a pity they must melt."

Soon after this Kay looked in with thick gloves on his hands and a sledge slung across his back. He shouted into Gerda's ears—"I've got leave to drive in the great square where the others are playing," and away he went.

In the square the boldest boys used often to fasten the sledges on to the peasants' waggons, and to scud along a good way. This was fine fun for them. Whilst they were now at the height of their sport there came a large sledge; it was painted white, and the driver was wrapped in a white fur cloak and covered with a white fur hood. The sledge swept twice round the square. Kay had tied his own little sledge to it at once, and he was whirled along with it. On they went, faster and faster, into the next street; the driver turned round and nodded at Kay, just as if they were old acquaintances; and every time Kay was going to loosen his little sledge the other turned and nodded again. So Kay sat still, and they drove right out of the town gates. Presently the snow began to fall so thickly that the boy could hardly see a hand's breadth before him; and still they were rushing onwards. He made haste to untie the cord that bound him to the other sledge, but it was no use—his little car still held fast; and still they went like the wind. Then he called out loud, but nobody heard him; and the sledge flew through the driving snow, and every now and then it made a leap, as if springing over hedges and ditches. He was frightened out of his wits; he wanted to say, "Our Father," but he could remember nothing but the multiplication table.

The snow-flakes grew larger and larger; at last they looked like great white fowls. All at once they fell aside, the great sledge stopped, and the driver arose; the cloak and the cap were of sheer snow; it was a lady, tall and stately, and of dazzling whiteness—it was the Snow Queen.

"We have come at a good pace," she said. "But what! Is the child freezing? creep under my bear-skin." And she seated him beside her in the sledge, and threw the shaggy cloak around him; he felt as if he were sinking into a snow-drift.

"Art freezing still?" she asked, and then she kissed him on the forehead. Ugh! it was colder than ice; it pierced right down to his heart, though that was more than half a lump of ice already. He thought he was going to die, but the next moment he was all the better for it: he took no more heed of the cold around him.

"My sledge! don't forget my sledge!" that was his first thought. One of the strange white fowls was harnessed on to it, and set to follow in their rear. The Snow Queen kissed Kay again, and he forgot little Gerda, and grandmother, and all the people at home.

"Now that is the last kiss," she said; "or I shall kiss thee to death."

Kay looked at her. She was so beautiful; a brighter looking face he could not well imagine. She did not seem ice now, as she did when she sat outside the window and beckoned to him. In his eyes she was perfect. He was not at all afraid of her.

He told her that he could do sums in his head, with fractions and all, that he knew what square miles there were in every country; and "how many inhabitants." And she listened with a fixed smile. Then it struck him that this was not enough to know after all; and he gazed up into the wide blank space, and she flew away with him, flew high aloft on the dark cloud; and the wind whistled and wailed,—it seemed as if it sang old ballads. They flew over woods and lakes, over lands and seas. Beneath them the cold blast shrieked, the wolves howled, the snow glistened, and above the snow there went flights of hoarse black crows. But high above all shone the moon, large and clear; and Kay gazed upon it through the long, long winter nights:—when daylight came, he slept at the Snow Queen's feet.

GOSSIP THE THIRD.

THE GARDEN OF THE WOMAN WHO KNEW WITCHCRAFT.

BUT how then did it fare with little Gerda when Kay never returned? Where ever could he be? No one knew, no one could give any account of him. The boys could only tell how they had seen him fasten his little sledge to a handsome large one, that had driven into the street, and out of the town gates. Nobody knew what had become of him since. Many were the tears that flowed. Little Gerda wept long and bitterly. At last people said he was dead; he must have fallen into the river, that ran by the walls of the town. Oh! long and dreary were those winter days.

And now came the spring with warmer sunshine.

"Kay is dead and gone!" said little Gerda.

"I don't believe it!" said the sunshine.

"He is dead and gone!" she said to the swallows.

"I don't believe it!" they answered,—and so, at last, Gerda did not believe it either.

"I will put my new red shoes on," she said one morning; "those that Kay has never seen yet. And then I will go down to the river and ask after him!"

It was quite early. She kissed old Grandmother, who was still asleep, put the red shoes on, and walked all by herself out of the gates, and down to the river.

"Is it true thou hast taken my little playfellow? I will make thee a present of my red shoes, if thou wilt only give him me back again."

And the ripples, she fancied, nodded at her strangely. Then she took her red shoes, the best treasure she had, and threw them both into the river. But they fell close to the bank, and the ripples soon landed them at her feet. It seemed as if the river refused to take her best treasure, as it had no little Kay to give in return. But

THE WITCH IN THE CHERRY GARDEN
DRAWING IN GERDA'S BOAT WITH HER
CRUTCH.



now she thought she had not thrown the shoes far enough, so she scrambled into a boat that lay among the rushes, and ran to the other end of it, and threw out her shoes. But the boat was not tied fast to the shore, and at the effort she made in throwing, it slipped away. She saw this, and hurried back; but before she reached the other end of the boat, it was more than a yard off land, and now it glided away still faster.

Then little Gerda was frightened outright, and sobbed and cried. But nobody heard her except the sedge-birds, and they could not carry her ashore; but they flew all along the banks, singing as if to comfort her: "Here are we! here are we!" The boat drove down stream. Little Gerda sat up in her stockings without daring to move. Her little red shoes floated after her, but they could not catch the boat, that kept going at greater speed.

There were beauties to be seen on both banks—bright flowers, old trees, and green slopes with cows and sheep, but not a single human being.

"Perhaps the river is bearing me to little Kay," thought Gerda; and that put her in better spirits. She got up, and stood looking for hours at the beautiful shores. Presently they came to a large cherry orchard, where there stood a thatched cottage, with such curious red and blue windows, and with two wooden soldiers standing in front, and presenting arms to those who sailed by.

Gerda called out to them, thinking they were alive; but, naturally enough, they made her no answer. She passed very near them, as the current drove the boat close along the shore.

Gerda called louder still; and then out of the cottage hobbled an old old woman, leaning on a hook stick. She wore a broad sun-hat, that was painted all over with the prettiest flowers.

"Thou poor little child!" said the old woman; "how ever didst thou get out on that great rough river, so far in the wide world alone!" And then she walked right into the water, hooked her stick fast in the boat, pulled it ashore, and lifted out little Gerda.

And Gerda was very glad indeed to be once more on dry land; but still she felt a little afraid of the old stranger woman.

"Come and tell me now, who thou art, and how thou comest here," she said.

And Gerda told her all; and the old dame shook her head, and said, "Hm! hm!" And when Gerda had told everything, and asked whether she had not seen little Kay, the old woman said he had not passed by yet, but he would be sure to come soon; she might just as well give up fretting, and taste some nice cherries, and look at some pretty flowers,—prettier they were than any picture-book, and could each tell her a whole story. And so she took Gerda by the hand, and they went into the cottage together; and the old woman locked the door.

The windows stood high up in the walls; and through the red, and blue, and

yellow panes the daylight fell in a strange patchwork of colours. But the finest sight was on the table, a most splendid heap of cherries! and Gerda might eat as many as she pleased,—and so she did. And while she was eating them, the old dame combed her hair with a golden comb; and the hair clustered in bright yellow curls about the winning little face, that was so round, and looked so like a rose.

“Just such a sweet little lass have I been longing for, ever so much!” said the old dame. “You will soon see how well we two shall get on together.” And still, as she went on combing Gerda’s hair, the little girl thought less and less of her foster-brother. For the old dame knew the art of witchcraft; not that she practised it in a wicked way, but she did a little now and then for her own amusement, and she wished very much to keep little Gerda. So she went out into the garden, and stretched her hook-stick towards all the rose bushes; and however freshly they might be blooming, they all sank down into the black earth, and their place was no longer to be found. The old dame was afraid, you see, that if Gerda spied the roses, she would be sure to think of her own roses; and then she would think of Kay; and then she would run away.

Now she led Gerda out into the flower-garden. Hah! here was fragrance, here was beauty! Flowers of every sort and every season stood in their fullest bloom. No picture-book could look so gay. Gerda jumped for joy, and played till the sun went down behind the tall cherry-trees. Then she was put into a bed that had red silk cushions stuffed with blue violets; and here she slept and dreamed, as happy as any queen on her wedding-day.

Next morning again she was allowed to play with the flowers in the warm sunshine. And so things went on for many days. Gerda got to know every flower; but, many as there were, it seemed as if there was still one wanting; yet which it was she could not make out. Now it happened that one day she sat looking at the old dame’s sun-hat, with the painted flowers on it; and what should be the prettiest of them all but a rose! The old dame had forgotten to wash the painted rose out of her hat, when she charmed the real ones down into the earth. But it is no easy matter to think of everything. “What!” burst out Gerda, “are there no roses here?” And she jumped in among the beds, and sought, and sought in vain. But her hot tears fell on the very spot where one of the rose-trees had sunk down; and when her tears watered the earth, up started the tree, as flourishing as when it sank. And Gerda embraced it, and kissed the blossoms, and thought of the beautiful roses at home, and thought at the same time of Kay.

“Oh! how I have been loitering!” said the little girl. “Why, I set out to look for Kay. Do you know where he is?” she asked the roses: “do you think he is dead and gone for ever?”

“No, not dead!” said the roses. “We have been down in the earth ourselves, and that’s where all the dead go; but Kay was not there.”

“Thanks,” said little Gerda. And she went to the other flowers, and looked into the flower-cups and asked, “Do you know where little Kay is?”

But every flower stood in the sunshine, dreaming its own dream, whether a fairy-

THE OLD WITCH COMBING GERDA'S
HAIR WITH A GOLDEN COMB TO CAUSE
HER TO FORGET HER FRIEND.

tale or some other fancy.¹ And many of these did Gerda hear; but not one had anything to tell of Kay.

And what said the tiger-lily then?

"Dost hear the drum go tum-tum? There are but two notes—tum-tum! Hark to the dirge of the women, to the cries of the priests! The Hindoo widow, in her long red robe, is seated on the funeral pile. The flames soar around her, and round the dead man by her side! But she thinks of a living one, who stands in the encircling crowd; of him, whose eyes are fiercer than the pile; the fires of whose eyes burn hotter to her heart than the flames that will soon devour her body. The flames of the heart now;—will they die in the flames of the funeral pile?"

"That I cannot understand at all!" said little Gerda.

"That is my tale!" said the tiger-lily.

What says the convolvulus?

"Over the narrow mountain-road there hangs an ancient knightly castle. Thick evergreens cluster up the old red walls, leaf upon leaf, so high as to embower the balcony. A girl stands there. She bends from the balustrade, and looks down along the road. Not a rose hangs fresher from its bough than she. Not an apple-blossom, wafted from the tree, can sway more gracefully than she. How it rustles, that silken robe! Ah! when will he ever come?"

"Is it Kay, you mean?" asked little Gerda.

"I am only telling my tale—my dream!" said the convolvulus.

And what says the snowdrop?

"Between two trees there is a board, hanging there by ropes; it is a swing. Two dainty little maidens, their frocks as white as snow, and their hats decked with long, green, fluttering ribbons, are seated on the swing. Their brother, who is bigger than they, stands upon it, and he has thrown his arms around the ropes to keep himself steady; for in one hand he holds a little cup, in the other a clay pipe: he is blowing bubbles. The swing goes up and down, and the bubbles float about in glittering, shifting colours. The last bubble still hangs on the pipe-stem, and bends in the wind. The swing keeps going. A little black dog, almost as light as the bubbles, stands on his hind legs, and begs to be taken up too. The swing flies up; the dog tumbles backward, and barks, and is angry. He is fooled, and the bubbles burst. A swinging board—a dissolving frothy splendour—such is the burthen of my song!"

"That may be all very pretty; but thou sayest it so dismally, and dost not mention the name of Kay. What say the hyacinths?"

"There were three beautiful sisters, wonderfully fair and fragile. One of them had a red kirtle, another a blue, and the third a pure white one. Hand in hand they danced along the calm lake in the bright moonlight. They were not Elfin maids; they were

¹ It is evident that two, at least, of these rhapsodies were partly suggested by the Danish names of the flowers in question; as the *tiger-lily* is called by the Danes *fire-lily*, and the *snowdrop* is called *summer-dupe*.

daughters of man. There was perfume in the air. The maidens vanished in the wood, and the perfume grew sweeter still. Three biers, with the three fair girls laid upon them, glided out from the depths of the wood, and passed across the lake. Fire-flies flew around them like little fluttering torches. Do the dancing maidens sleep, or are they dead? The perfume sayeth they are corpses: the evening bell is ringing for the dead."

"You make me quite wretched!" said little Gerda. "Your own perfume is so strong, I cannot help thinking of the dead maidens. And, ah! is little Kay then really dead? The roses have been down in the earth, and they say 'No!'"

"Ding-dong," rang the hyacinth bells; "we ring not for little Kay; we know him not. We are but singing our own song—the only one we know."

And Gerda went to the buttercup, that shone forth between its glossy green leaves.

"Thou art a bright little sun!" said Gerda. "Tell me, if thou canst, where I may find my foster-brother."

And the buttercup smiled brightly back at her. What sort of lay now would the buttercup have to sing? Again—it was not of Kay!

"It was the first day of spring. God's sun was shining warm into a narrow courtyard. The beams glided down the white wall of the neighbour's house; and close up to it grew the first yellow flowers—glittering gold in the sunbeams. Grandmother sat outside in her arm-chair. Her daughter's daughter, the poor pretty servant girl, had come home for a flying visit. She kissed her grandmother: and there was gold, the heart's pure gold, in that blessed kiss. Gold on the lips, and gold in the heart, and gold up yonder in the morning sky!—See, that is all my story!" said the buttercup.

"My poor old grandmother!" sighed Gerda. "Ay, she is sure to be longing after me; and grieving for me as she did for Kay. But I shall soon go home again, and take Kay with me. It is no use asking the flowers, they only know their own songs, and don't give me any news at all." And she tucked up her little frock, to run the faster; but as she sprang over the Narcissus, it struck her on the leg; so she stopped, and looking at the tall flower, she asked: "Hast thou any news, then!" And she bent down close to the Narcissus: and what did it say?

"I can see myself! I can see myself!" said the Narcissus. "And oh! how sweet I smell! Up in the little attic room there stands a little dancer, only half dressed: she stands now on one leg, now on both; she kicks at the whole world. She is a mere illusion. She pours water from her teapot on to the piece of linen in her hand: that is her bodice. Cleanliness is a fine thing! Now then for the white skirt hanging on yonder hook: that is washed in the teapot water too, and dried upon the roof. When she puts it on, she will tie a saffron kerchief round her neck, and that will make the dress look whiter. One leg in the air again! How proud she is of standing on one stalk! I can see myself! I can see myself!"

"I don't care a bit about all that!" said Gerda. "It is not worth the telling," and so she ran to the outskirts of the garden.


The door was fastened; but she worked the rusty cramp about till it got loose, and the door burst open; and little Gerda, with her bare feet, ran out into the wide world. She looked back thrice, but there was no one following her. At last she could run no further. She sat down on a large stone, and looked around her. The summer was gone: it was late in the autumn! This could never have been perceived in the beautiful garden, that always had summer sunshine, and flowers of every season.

"Dear! how I have been loitering!" said little Gerda. "Why, it is autumn! I mustn't dawdle here any longer." And she rose to go further on.

Oh! how sore and weary were her little feet! and how cold and bleak looked everything around! The long willow leaves were all yellow, and dripping with the mist. One leaf fell after another; and the only fruits left hanging were the sloes, and they were sour enough to pucker up one's lips. Alas! it was grey and gloomy now, whichever way one turned.

GOSSIP THE FOURTH.

PRINCE AND PRINCESS.

ERDA was soon obliged to stop and rest again. Presently a large Crow came hopping on the snow, opposite to where she sat. After cocking his head from side to side, and looking at her for some time, he said, "Caw! caw!—good da! good da!" His speech was rather imperfect; but he meant well towards the girl; and he went on to ask where in the world she was going all alone. That word "alone" Gerda understood well, and she felt the full weight of it. So she told the Crow the whole story of her life, and asked whether he had not seen Kay.

And the Crow nodded thoughtfully, and said, "May be so! May be so!"

"No! have you really?" cried the little girl, half choking the Crow with kissing him.

"Gently now! gently!" said the Crow. "It may be little Kay I'm thinking of; but then he must have forgotten you for the Princess."

"Is he lodging at a Princess's?" asked Gerda.

"Just listen a bit!" said the Crow. "But it's hard work for me to talk in your tongue. Can't you understand the Caw-caw tongue? Then we shall get on better."

"No, that I can't!" said Gerda. "There's Grandmother now, they say that she knows the caw-caw tongue, and knew the coo-coo tongue too when she was younger. I only wish somebody would teach me."

"All in good time," said the Crow. "But for the present I'll talk your language as well as I can, though the best will be bad enough." And so he told his story, something like this:—

"In the kingdom we are now sitting in there dwells a princess, who is enormously clever. She has read all the newspapers in the world, and forgotten them again,—she is so clever. A short time ago she was sitting on her throne,—not so pleasant a seat as one might fancy, they say—when she happened to hum the words of—*Ah me! when shall I marry me?*—‘There is something in that, too!’ says she, and married she resolves to be. But the man she will choose must be one who knows how to answer when he is spoken to; not one who can do nothing but look grand; that is so tedious. So the ladies of the court were all drummed together, and were delighted to hear of her intentions. ‘Now, that is what I like!’ said one and all: ‘it’s the very thing I’ve been thinking of myself!’ You may believe every word I am saying,” continued the Crow; “there is a tame sweetheart of mine, who has the range of the whole palace, and she it was who told me all.”

His sweetheart, one need hardly say, was a Crow like himself, for birds of a feather flock together.

"The newspapers came out next day with ornamental borders of hearts and the Princess’s monogram. They announced that all young men of good presence were at liberty to go up and have a talk with the Princess; and that whoever talked better than all the rest, and showed himself quite at home in the palace,—him the Princess would choose for her consort. “Ay, ay!” continued the Crow; “I tell you the plain truth, as sure as I sit here. The people thronged up to the palace. There was a rush and a race to be foremost, but no success for any one, either the first or second day. The young men could talk glibly enough, so long as they were out in the street; but when they came inside the gates, and saw the guards all in silver, and the lackeys on the staircase in gold, and the spacious halls blazing with light, they were quite dumbfounded; and when they stood before the Princess on her throne, they could only repeat the last word which she spoke to them, and which she had no desire to hear over again. It seemed as if they had swallowed a pound of snuff, and were walking about the palace in a swoon; though when they once got back into the street they could chatter as fast as ever. There was a long line of them from the city gate right up to the palace. I was there, and saw it with my own eyes,” said the Crow. “They grew hungry and thirsty whilst waiting for their turns, but they never got so much as a glass of stale water from the palace. Certainly, some of the more knowing ones had brought sandwiches with them; but these they did not share with their neighbour, but said to themselves, ‘The more starved he looks the better; then the Princess will not choose him!’”

“But Kay! little Kay!” asked Gerda. “When did he come? Was he amongst the crowd?”

“Wait a bit! wait a bit! we are just coming to him. It was now the third day when a little personage who had neither horse nor carriage, strutted boldly straight up to the palace. He had eyes as bright as your own, and beautiful long hair, but only poor clothes on.”

"That was Kay!" shouted Gerda joyfully. "Oh, then I have found him!" and she clapped her hands together.

"He carried a small wallet on his back," said the Crow.

"No, his sledge, I daresay!" said Gerda; "for he went away with his sledge."

"May be so," said the Crow; "I did not look at it very closely. But this I heard from my tame sweetheart, that when he entered the palace gates, and saw the royal guards in silver, and the lackeys upon the staircase in gold, he was not abashed—not a bit of it—but nodded and said to them, 'It must be tiresome to keep standing out on the stairs, I mean to go in!' The halls were in full blaze; Lord Chamberlains and High Excellences, bearing gold plates, were gliding about in their stockings; it seemed enough to make any man solemn. His own boots creaked horribly, yet nothing could put him out of countenance."

"Yes, it *was* Kay!" said Gerda. "I know he had new boots; I have heard them creak in grandmother's room."

"Creak they did, indeed!" said the Crow; "and yet bold as brass did he march right up to the Princess. She was sitting on a pearl as large as a spinning-wheel; and all the court ladies, with their ladies'-maids, and their ladies'-maids' maids, and all the gentlemen-in-waiting, with their flunkeys and their flunkeys' flunkeys, down to their errand-boys, stood on each side in order; and the nearer they were to the door, the prouder they looked. The flunkeys' flunkeys' errand-boy stands at the door in his pumps, almost too proud to be looked at."

"How terrible that must have been!" said little Gerda. "And Kay really won the Princess after all?"

"If I had not been a Crow, I would have taken her myself, in spite of my being pledged to another. He must have talked as well, though, as I do, when I speak the Caw-caw tongue, from all that I heard from my tame sweetheart. He said, with a dashing, charming air, that he was not come here to woo, but only to hear the wit and wisdom of the Princess. These he found very good, and she soon found him the same."

"Oh I am quite sure it was Kay!" said Gerda; "he was so clever; he could do sums in his head, fractions and all! Oh, please take me into the palace!"

"That is easily said," replied the Crow; "but how is it to be done? I must talk it over with my tame sweetheart, and she will advise us what to do. For one thing I can tell you, that a little girl like you will never get leave to enter at the front door."

"Oh, but I shall, though!" said Gerda. "When Kay is told I am here, he will come out at once and fetch me."

"Wait for me at the stile yonder," said the Crow, wagging his head, and then flying away.

It was dark before the Crow returned. "Rare! rare!" he said; "I bring you many greetings from my sweetheart, and a little loaf that she got in the kitchen: there is plenty of bread there, and you must be well-nigh starved. There is no chance of your

being allowed to enter the palace. Only look at your bare feet. The guards in silver, and the lackeys in gold, could never stand that. But don't cry, now; we'll manage to smuggle you in. My sweetheart knows a little back staircase that leads to the bed-chamber, and she knows where to find the key."

So they went into the garden, down the great avenue, where the leaves were falling fast; and when the lights in the palace had gone out one by one, the Crow took little Gerda to a back door that stood ajar.

Gerda's heart, how it throbbed with fear and longing! as if she were about to do something wrong. And yet all she wanted was to know whether this was little Kay! Ah surely it must be he! Already she fancied she could see his clever eyes, his long hair; she could see him smiling as in old days, when they sat at home under the roses. No doubt he would be glad to see her; to hear how far she had come for his sake; and how sorry they had all been at home when he did not return. What fear it was for her, and yet what joy!

Now they were at the top of the stairs. A small lamp was burning on a cabinet; and on the floor before them stood the tame Crow, turning her head from side to side, and surveying Gerda, who dropped a curtsey just as her grandmother had taught her.

"My betrothed has mentioned you most favourably, my little lady," said the tame Crow. "Your life-records (as we people of fashion call them) are also vastly touching. Be so good as to take the lamp, and I will precede you. We will follow the straight road, for then we shall be sure to meet no one."

"I seem to hear somebody close behind me, though!" said Gerda. And something came whizzing past her; and there were shadows flitting along the wall, like horses with streaming manes and slender legs; and huntsmen, knights, and ladies on horseback.

"Those are only the dreams," said the Crow, "that are coming to fetch their Serene Highnesses' thoughts to a hunting party. You will be all the better able to regard them in their bed. And now, dear, if you arrive at honours and dignities, mind you let me see you have a truly grateful heart."

"There's no use talking to her like that!" said the Wild Crow.

They now entered the first room. The hangings were of rose-coloured satin, festooned with artificial flowers. Here the dreams began already to come whizzing back again; but they rushed by so fast that Gerda could hardly distinguish the noble company. One room followed another in more and more splendour, till at last it was quite astounding; and the most splendid of all was the bed-chamber. The ceiling was like a canopy of palm-leaves, all of glass—costly glass—with a thick stem of gold springing from the middle of the floor. There were two beds hanging from the stem, and both were shaped like lilies. One of them was white: in this lay the Princess. The other was red: and here it was that Gerda had to look for little Kay. She bent one of the red leaves aside, and there she saw a brown neck. Oh, yes, it was Kay! She called out his name quite loud, and held the lamp close to him. The dreams came galloping

into the chamber again; he woke up, turned his head round, and—it was *not* little Kay!

The Prince had a throat like Kay's, but nothing else, except that he was young and handsome. And now from the white lily-bed the Princess peeped out, and asked what was the matter. Then little Gerda cried, and told her whole story, and all that the Crows had done for her.

"Poor little thing!" said the Prince and the Princess. And they praised the Crows, and said they were not at all angry, but still the Crows must not do such a thing again; this time they should have a reward for it.

"Do you choose to fly free?" asked the Princess. "Or would you rather receive fixed appointments as Court Crows, with all the kitchen leavings for your salaries.

The two Crows bowed low, and begged for the fixed appointment, for they both had an eye to the future; and "It is a comfort for me," said the Wild Crow, "to have something in store for the old man!"—by which he meant himself.

The Prince got out of his bed, and insisted on Gerda's sleeping in it, and no one could do more than that! She folded her small hands, and thought, "How kind men are, and animals too!" and so she closed her eyes, and slept a blessed sleep. All the dreams came flying in again, looking now like angels from heaven; and they dragged a little sledge after them, and there sat Kay nodding at her. But this was all dream work, and vanished as soon as she awoke.

The next day she was decked from top to toe in silks and satins. She was invited to stay at the palace, and lead an easy life there; but she begged them only to give her a little one-horse cart and a pair of small boots, and let her go out into the wide world again, and seek for Kay.

And she got the boots and a muff besides, and made a very neat little figure. And as soon as she was ready, a new carriage of pure gold was waiting at the door, with the arms of the Prince and Princess glittering like a star upon it; and the coachmen, footmen, and jockeys—for there were jockeys in front—all of them wore gold coronets. The Prince and Princess themselves handed her in, and wished her good speed. The Wild Crow, who was now married, accompanied her the first fifteen miles; he sat beside her, as riding backwards did not agree with him. The other Crow remained standing at the gate, and flapping her wings; she did not go with them, for she had been suffering from headache ever since she had got the fixed appointment, and too much given her to eat. The coach inside was lined with cakes, and in the dickey behind there were fruits and gingerbread-nuts.

"Farewell, farewell!" cried the Prince and Princess. And little Gerda cried, and so did the Crows. And thus they got over the first miles. Then the Crow, in his turn, bade her farewell; and this was the saddest parting of all. He flew up into a tree, and flapped his black wings, as long as he could see the carriage, that beamed like the bright sunshine.

GOSSIP THE FIFTH.

THE LITTLE ROBBER-GIRL.



HEY drove through the dark forest, but the coach shone like a torch ; it flashed into the eyes of the robbers, and this was more than they could stand.

"It is gold ! it is gold !" they shouted. They rushed forward, seized the horses, killed the jockeys, the coachman, and the footmen, and dragged little Gerda out of the carriage.

"She is fat, she is delicate, she has been fattened on nuts !" said the old Robber-woman, who had a long bristly beard and eyebrows that hung down over her eyes. "She is as good as a little fatted lamb. Ah, hah ! how sweet she will taste." And she drew forth her bright knife that gleamed horribly.

"Oh, oh !" she cried next moment—for she was bitten in the ear by her own little daughter, who hung upon her back, and who was so wild and mischievous it was quite delightful.—"You filthy cub !" exclaimed the mother, and stopped short instead of killing Gerda.

"She shall play with me," said the little Robber-girl. "She shall give me her muff and her pretty frock and sleep in bed with me." And she bit her mother again, till the Robber-woman sprang up and ran about, while the robbers laughed and said, "Look how she dances with her cub !"

"I will ride in the carriage," said the little Robber-girl, and whatever she would have she had, for she was quite spoiled and stubborn. She and Gerda got in together, and drove away over stock and stone deeper into the forest. The little Robber-girl was about as tall as Gerda, but stronger and more broad-shouldered. Her skin was dark, and her eyes were quite black, and looked almost melancholy. She put her arm round little Gerda's waist, and said, "They shall not kill thee unless I get angry with thee. No doubt, thou art a princess ?"

"Nay !" replied Gerda. And she told all that had happened to her, and all about her love for little Kay.

The Robber-girl looked at her quite earnestly, gave a short nod, and said, "They shall not kill thee, even if I do get angry with thee—then I shall do it myself." Then she dried Gerda's eyes, and put both her own hands into the pretty muff that was so soft and warm.

Presently the carriage stopped. They were in the court-yard of a robber's castle. It was riven from top to bottom, and out of the gaping rifts flew crows and ravens ; while great mastiffs, that looked each as if they could swallow a man, kept leaping up aloft, though they did not bark,—for that was forbidden.

In the great old sooty hall a fire was blazing on the stone floor; the smoke gathered under the ceiling, and found an outlet where it could. Soup was boiling in a large cauldron, and hares and rabbits were turning on the spit.

"Thou shalt sleep with me amongst all my pet beasts," said the Robber-girl. They had something to eat and drink, and then withdrew into a corner that was covered with straw and bits of carpet. Overhead were nearly a hundred pigeons, perched on beams and bars; they all seemed to be asleep, but turned their heads a little when the girls drew near.

"They are all mine!" said the Robber-girl. And seizing hold of the nearest bird she held it by its legs, and shook it till its wings flapped again and again. "Kiss it," she cried, and slapped Gerda in the face with it. "Yonder sit the wood vagabonds," she continued, pointing to a number of laths that were nailed across a hole high up in the wall. "They are wood-vagabonds, those two; they will fly off like a shot if they are not shut up tight. And here stands my old sweetheart, *Bah!*" and she pulled a reindeer forward by the horn—he was tied up and had a bright copper ring round his neck:—"Him, too, we have to hold in a vice, or he would spring away from us. Every evening I tickle him in the neck with my sharp knife:—*that* he is afraid of!" And the little girl drew out a long knife from a chink in the wall and passed it over the reindeer's throat. The poor animal kicked out, the Robber-girl laughed aloud, and then pulled Gerda to bed with her.

"Do you wish to keep hold of the knife while you are asleep?" asked Gerda, looking at it rather timidly.

"I always sleep knife in hand," said the Robber-girl; "one never knows what may happen. But tell me over again now what you told me before about little Kay, and how you came to be out in the wide world by yourself." And Gerda told the whole story again; and the wood pigeons cooed in the coop above, but the other pigeons were fast asleep. The little Robber-girl laid one arm round Gerda's neck, and held the knife in her other hand, and slept, so that one could hear it. But Gerda could not close her eyes, she felt so doubtful whether she would live or die. The robbers sat round the fire, singing and drinking, and the Robber-woman threw somersaults. Ugh! it was a horrible sight for the little girl to look at.

Then spoke the wood-pigeons: "Coorah-coo! we have seen little Kay: a white fowl bore away his sledge: he sat in the Snow Queen's wain: and it rushed forth, low above the forest: there, where we lay in the nest: the Snow Queen breathed upon the brood: and all died, saving us two alone. Coorah! coorah!"

"What are you saying up there?" cried Gerda. "Where was the Snow Queen going? Do you know anything of that?"

"To Lapland, no doubt; for ice and snow are always there. Only ask the reindeer, who is tied up yonder."

"Ay, a good and blessed land! ice and snow are there!" said the Reindeer.

"There one ranges freely over the wide shining plain. There the Snow Queen pitches her summer-tent. But her regular palace is up against the North Pole, on the island that they call Spitzbergen."

"Oh, Kay, little Kay!" sighed Gerda.

"Now keep still, I say," muttered the Robber-girl, "or thou wilt feel the knife in thy ribs."

When morning came, Gerda repeated all that the wood-pigeons had said, and the little Robber-girl looked very grave; but then she nodded her head, and said: "Well, never mind! never mind! Know'st thou where Lapland is?" she asked the Reindeer.

"Who should know better than I?" said the creature, his eyes kindling as he spoke. "There was I born and bred; there have I scoured the snow-fields!"

"Listen!" said the Robber-girl to Gerda. "Thou seest all our men are gone; but mother is still here, and means to stay. But about noon she will take a sup out of the great flask, and next have a little nap; then I can do something for thee." And now she jumped out of bed, and threw herself on her mother's neck, pulling her beard, and saying: "My sweet buck goat, good morning!" And her mother flipped her under the nose, till it was red and blue. But this was all out of sheer love.

After a time, when the mother had taken her sup, and was having her nap, the Robber-girl went up to the Reindeer, and said: "It would give me immense pleasure to tickle thee many times more with the sharp knife, for then thou art so droll. But never mind; I will untie thy rope, and let thee slip out, and run away to Lapland. Only thou must stretch a good leg, and carry this little girl to the Snow Queen's palace, where her playfellow is shut up. No doubt thou hast heard what she was telling me, for she talked quite loud enough, and thou art an eavesdropper."

The Reindeer bounded for joy. The Robber-girl lifted Gerda on his back, taking the precaution to bind her fast on, and even to give her a little cushion to sit upon. "Well," said she, "there are thy fur boots, for thou'lt have a cold journey. But the muff I can't give up, it's really too nice. Never mind, though, thou shalt not freeze. Here are mother's great leather gauntlets; they'll reach up thine arm to the elbow. On with them! Now thou lookest, about the hands at least, just like my ugly mother."

And Gerda was weeping for joy.

"I cannot stand this whimpering!" said the little Robber-girl. "Now, just contrive to look happy! And there are two loaves and a ham for thee, so that thou wilt not starve." Both these lots were tied on to the Reindeer. The little Robber-girl opened the door, coaxed all the big dogs into the house, cut the rope with her knife, and said to the Reindeer, "Be off! but take good care of the little girl!"

And Gerda stretched out her hands, with the great leather gauntlets on, towards the Robber-girl, and said farewell. And away flew the Reindeer over bush and brake, through the great forest, and over moss and moor, with all his might and main. The wolves howled, and the ravens shrieked. "Fwit! fwit!" sounded something up in the air; it was just as if the sky were sneezing itself red.

"Those are my own old Northern Lights," said the Reindeer; "see how they shine!" and the pace grew faster still. He sped along both day and night. The loaves were eaten, and the ham too. And now they were in Lapland.

GOSSIP THE SIXTH.

THE LAPLAND-WOMAN AND THE FINMARK-WOMAN.



HEY stopped at a little hut—such a wretched one! The roof came down to the ground, and the door was so low that people had to crawl on their stomachs when going in or out. No one was at home except an old Lapland-woman, who stood frying fish over an oil lamp. And the Reindeer told her Gerda's whole history (but first his own, for that seemed to him much more important), Gerda being so overcome by the cold that she could not speak.

"Ah, poor things!" said the Lapland-woman; "then you have still a long way to run. You must go more than five hundred miles into Finmark, for there the Snow-Queen holds her summer palace, and burns blue lights every evening. I will write a few words on a dried stock-fish—there's no paper here—and you may take it to the Finmark-woman who lives up yonder. She can direct you better than I can."

And now, when Gerda had been well warmed, and had something to eat and drink, the Lapland-woman wrote a few words on a stock-fish, bade Gerda take good care of it, and again bound her firmly on to the Reindeer's back. Again they sped onwards. "Fwit! fwit!" sounded from the sky; and all night long there streamed the most beautiful blue Northern Lights. So at length they came to Finmark, and knocked at the Finmark-woman's chimney, for she had got no door at all.

It was so hot down below, that the old woman went about nearly naked. She was very short and very grimy. She loosened little Gerda's clothes, took off her fur boots and leather gauntlets, or else the heat would have been too much for her; laid a lump of ice on the Reindeer's head; and then read what was written on the stock-fish. She read it three times, till she knew it by heart: and then she put the fish into the stewing-pot; it was all good to eat, and she never wasted anything.

Then the Reindeer told first his own story, and next that of little Gerda. And the Finmark-woman blinked her keen eyes, but made no remark.

"You are so clever," said the Reindeer; "I know you can tie up all the winds of the world in a skein of thread. If the skipper loosens one knot of it, he will have a fair wind; if he loosens the second, it will blow hard; and if he loosens the third and fourth, it will storm the forest down. Will you not give this little maid such a draught that she will get the strength of twelve men, and conquer the Snow-Queen?"

"Twelve men's strength!" said the Finmark woman: "much use *that* would be!" And she went off to a shelf, took down a large leather roll, and unrolled it. There were strange letters written upon it, and she read them till the drops ran down from her forehead.

But again the Reindeer pleaded so warmly for little Gerda, and Gerda looked with such beseeching, tearful eyes at the Finmark-woman, that the latter began to blink again; and taking the Reindeer into a corner, and putting a fresh lump of ice on his head, she whispered:—

"Little Kay is dwelling at the Snow-Queen's palace, sure enough; and everything there is quite to his heart's content, and he believes it is the finest place in the world. But that is because he has got a glass splinter in his heart, and a grain of glass in his eye. They must come out, or he will never belong to mankind again; but the Snow-Queen will keep her power over him."

"But can you not make something for little Gerda to drink that will give her power over one and all of them?"

"I can give her no greater power than what she has already. Do you not see how both men and animals are bound to serve her? and how far, upon bare feet, she has made her way in the world? We must not tell her of her power. Its source is in her heart—in her childish sweetness and innocence. If she cannot of herself reach the Snow Queen, and draw the glass fragments out of little Kay, we can do nothing for her. Ten miles hence begins the Snow Queen's garden. So far canst thou bear the little maid. Set her down by the great bush that stands full of red berries in the snow. Then tarry not for idle gossip, but hasten back hither again." When the Finmark-woman had done speaking to the Reindeer, she lifted little Gerda on his back, and again he set off at full speed.

"Oh! I have not got my boots! I have not got my big gloves!" cried little Gerda. She felt their loss in the piercing cold. But the Reindeer dared not stop. He ran till they reached the great bush with the red berries. Here he set Gerda down, and kissed her on the lips: and large bright tears rolled down his cheeks. Then he turned, and ran back as fast as he could run. And there stood poor Gerda, without shoes, without gloves, in the heart of the terrible icy-cold Finmark.

She ran forward as well as she could. A whole regiment of snowflakes came to meet her. But they did not fall from the sky; for it was clear and brilliant with the northern lights. The snowflakes ran straight along the ground; and the further Gerda advanced the larger they grew. Gerda remembered, well enough, how large and artificial those had appeared, that she had seen through the magnifying glass; but these were large and strange beyond all compare. They were dreadful—they were alive—they were the outposts of the Snow-Queen. What wonderful shapes!—some like monstrous porcupines; others like coils of snakes, with their heads projecting; and others like small thick bears, with bristling hair; but all were dazzling white, all were living snowflakes.

Then little Gerda prayed, saying, "Our Father." The cold was so strong, that she could see her own breath: it stood before her mouth like a cloud of smoke. The breath gathered thicker and thicker, and it took the forms of bright little angels, that grew larger as they reached the ground. They all wore helmets, and had spears and shields in their hands. They came swarming more and more; and when Gerda had ended her prayer, there was a whole legion around her. They thrust their spears against the horrible snowflakes, till they split into hundreds of pieces; and little Gerda went onwards unhurt and undaunted. The angels stroked her on the hands and feet, and she felt less how cold it was; and bravely did she hurry on for the palace of the Snow Queen.

But now we must first see, how it fares with Kay. He could scarcely have been thinking of little Gerda; least of all, that she stood outside the palace.

GOSSIP THE SEVENTH.

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE SNOW-QUEEN'S PALACE: AND WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS.



HE palace walls were made by the drifting snow, and the doors and windows by the cutting winds. There were more than a hundred halls, that were piled just as the snow drifted, the largest of them covering many miles. All were illumined by the strong northern lights: and all alike were vast and void, and icy cold and dazzling. Never was merriment known here—not even a bears' ball, such as when the big storm blusters, and the polar bears move about on their hind legs, with fine airs and graces; nor yet a music party, with trumpeting of lips and drumming of paws; no, nor an evening gossip among the white young Lady Foxes. Grand and desolate and deadly cold were the halls of the Snow-Queen. The Northern lights flared up so regularly, that one could reckon when they would be at their highest, and when at their lowest. In the midst of the far-stretching hall of state there was a frozen lake; it was split into a thousand pieces, but each piece was so exactly like the other, that it looked quite a master-work of art. When the Snow-Queen was at home here, she always sat in the centre of the lake. She sat here, she said, on the Mirror of Reason, and this was the best—the only one—in the world.

Little Kay was quite blue, nay almost black, with cold; but he did not perceive it, for she had kissed the cold shivers out of him; and his heart was no better than a lump of ice. He was always at work with pointed slabs of ice, which he laid in all possible positions, so as to form one figure after another, just as we do ourselves with flat bits of wood, in the game called the *Chinese puzzle*. Kay, in like manner, kept inventing most ingenious figures: this was the *Icepuzzle of Reason*. In his eyes these figures were

wonderfully clever, and of the very highest importance. This was all the doing of that grain of glass, which had settled in his eye. He put whole figures together that represented some written word. But there was one word that he could never devise; and it was just the one he wanted most to put together—the word *Eternity*. Now the Snow Queen had said, “Invent me that figure, and thou shalt be thine own lord and master; and I will give thee the whole world, and a new pair of skates.” But he could not.

“Now I shall rush away to the warm countries,” said the Snow Queen. “I wish to go and look down into the black cauldrons.” These were the fire-spitting mountains, Vesuvius and Etna, as people call them. “I shall whiten them a little: it is the proper thing, and it comes in nicely after lemons and grapes.” So away flew the Snow Queen, and Kay sat alone in the miles-long hall, looking at the slabs of ice, and pondering and pondering, till his brain-strings creaked again. He sat so stiff and still, that one might fancy he was frozen to death.

Then it was that little Gerda came into the palace through the great gate. This gate was full of cutting winds; but she said an evening prayer, and the winds fell, as if they were being lulled asleep. And she entered the vast void halls, and she saw Kay; she knew him: she flew to clasp his neck, and she held him fast, crying, “Kay! darling Kay! at last I have found thee!”

But he sat still, and stiff, and cold. Then little Gerda wept hot tears. They fell on his breast: they sank into his heart; they thawed that lump of ice, and dissolved the splinter of glass within it. He looked at her, and she sang the hymn—

“Roses down in the vale are sweet:
And there we must go, Child Jesu to meet!”

Then Kay burst into tears. He wept so that the grain of glass was washed out of his eye. He knew her again, and shouted with delight, “Gerda! sweet little Gerda! where canst thou have been so long? and where have I been myself?” He looked around him. “How cold it is here! and how waste, how wide!” And he clung to Gerda, and she laughed and wept for joy. It was so catching, that even the slabs of ice began dancing around her; and when they got tired, and lay down, they were arranged, of their own accord, in the very letters that the Snow Queen had told Kay to put together, saying that whenever he could do so, he should be his own lord and master, and she would give him the whole world and a new pair of skates.

And Gerda kissed his cheeks, and they bloomed afresh. She kissed his eyes, and they shone like her own. She kissed his hands and feet, and he became hale and hearty. And the Snow Queen might now come back: *there* was his charter of freedom, written in glittering ice.

They took each other by the hand, and wandered forth, out of the great palace. They talked of Grandmother, and of the roses upon the roof at home. And wherever they walked, the winds were quieted, and the sun broke forth. And when they drew

near the bush with the red berries, there stood the Reindeer awaiting them. And with him was another and a younger reindeer: it was a hind, and she bore full udders; and she kissed the children, and offered them her warm milk. And the two reindeers carried both Kay and Gerda; first, to the Finmark-woman's, where they warmed themselves in the hot room, and got directions for their journey home; and then to the Lapland-woman's, who had made new clothes for them, and had put her sledge in readiness.

And the Reindeer and the young hind gambolled beside them, as far as the limits of the land. Here came in sight the first green leaves; and here they parted from the reindeers, and from the Lapland woman. "Farewell! farewell!" said one and all. And now the first little birds began to twitter. The wood was budding green, and out of it galloped a noble steed that Gerda knew—(it had been one of the leaders in her gold carriage)—with a young girl for a rider, in a bright scarlet cap, carrying pistols in the holsters before her. It was the little Robber-girl! She had got tired of staying at home, and she was just setting out, first for the north, and next for some other quarter, if the north did not suit her. As soon as she and Gerda spied each other, there was great rejoicing.

"Thou'rt a rare fellow for tramping!" said she to little Kay. "I wonder, now, whether thou'rt worth the running after, from one end of the world to the other!"

But Gerda stroked her on the cheek, and asked after the Prince and the Princess.

"They're gone to foreign parts," replied the Robber-girl.

"And the Crow?" asked little Gerda.

"Ah! the Crow is dead," she answered. "The tame sweetheart has become a widow, and wears a black worsted-end round her leg. She makes a piteous lament, and it's gammon and spinach, every bit of it. But now tell me all that has happened to thyself, and how thou'st picked up this fellow here."

And Gerda and Kay told each their own stories.

And—"Snip-snap-snurry bassy-lurry!" sang the Robber-girl; squeezed them both by the hand; promised that if ever she passed their town she would certainly look them up; and then rode away into the wide world.

But Kay and Gerda walked hand in hand; and the further they walked the fairer grew Spring with her flowers and foliage. And now bells were ringing,—they knew those high church towers, that great city—their home was there. They entered the streets; they came to Grandmother's door; they climbed the stairs; they stood in the well-known room. Everything here was in its old place; and the clock said *tick! tick!* and the hands turned, as of yore; but as they passed the doorway, it struck them both, that they themselves were changed. They were youth and maiden now. The rose trees between the roofs bloomed up into the open windows, and beneath them stood the two children's stools, and Kay and Gerda

sat down upon them, and held each other by the hand. The cold shallow grandeur in the Snow Queen's palace was forgotten like a weary dream. Grandmother sat here in God's bright sunshine, and read from the Bible—"Unless ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

And Kay and Gerda looked one another full in the face, and they understood, both at once, the meaning of the old hymn :

"Roses down in the vale are sweet :
And there we must go, Child Jesu to meet !"

Side by side they sat, both of them full-grown and yet children—children in heart !
and it was summer, the warm and blessed time of summer.



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